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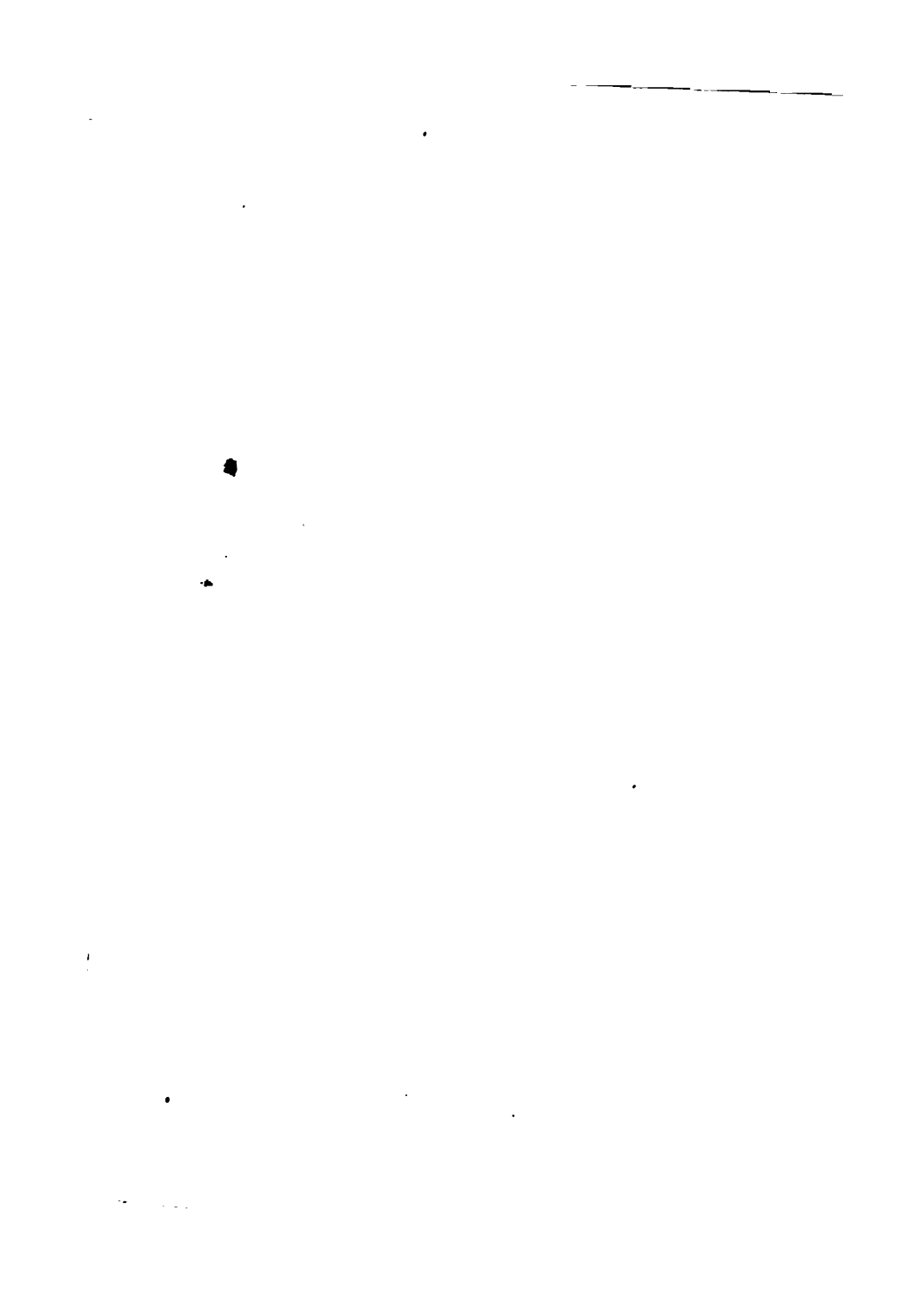
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STORIES OF
BIRD LIFE



A BOOK OF
FACTS AND ANECDOTES
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS







STORIES OF BIRD LIFE.









THE STORK AT HOME.

Page 290.



STORIES OF BIRD LIFE:

A Book of Facts and Anecdotes,

ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE HABITS AND INTELLIGENCE OF THE
FEATHERED TRIBES.

BY

HENRY BERTHOUD.



WITH ONE HUNDRED ILLUSTRATIONS.


LONDON:

T. NELSON AND SONS, PATERNOSTER ROW;
EDINBURGH; AND NEW YORK.

1875.

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Preface.

 HIS little volume is designed to encourage on the part of the juvenile reader a love for the study of natural history ; and, more especially, a habit of studying with careful interest the ways and the habits of Birds.

No purer source of amusement can be found for leisure hours ; none which is more easily cultivated, since the Birds are always around us and about us ; and none which is more refining or humanizing, from the effect produced on the mind by the subtly-blended plumage of our feathered friends, and the exquisite sweetness and variety of their melody.

The instinct, or rather the *intelligence*—for it is something more than instinct—of Birds, as developed in their care for their young, their construction of their nests, their selection of fitting food, their

adoption of various means of self-defence and protection, must always command the reverent admiration of the student. It teaches him a lesson which he will do well to profit by ; the lesson of obedience, of contentment, and of strict observance of the principles of nature. Birds, beasts, and insects, even to the minutest and meanest of their kind, act, as Southey says, with the unerring providence of instinct ; man, who possesses a higher faculty, abuses it, and therefore goes blundering on. *They*, by their unconscious and unhesitating obedience to the laws of nature, fulfil the end of their existence ; he, in wilful neglect of the laws of God, loses sight of the end of his.

In endeavouring to illustrate this "unerring providence of instinct," this remarkable Intelligence which sometimes approaches so nearly to Reason, neither author nor translator has presumed on the credulity of his readers by inserting extravagant stories or groundless fables. And, therefore, it is hoped that from the present volume they will derive not only *entertainment* but *instruction*, while they will hardly fail to acquire a fresh, a living, and a compassionate interest in the BIRDS.

"Hark ! how the cheerful Birds do chant their lays !"

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CHAPTER I.

AT HOME.

IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO MOVE OUT OF YOUR HOUSE, NOR EVEN OUT OF YOUR STUDY, TO EXAMINE THE WAYS AND HABITS OF THE BIRDS—WHAT ANIMALS THINK—FEATHERED GUESTS—THE SPARROW—HIS NEST—THE SWALLOWS, AND THEIR MASONRY—THEIR SURGERY, AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE HEALING ART—COMPULSORY EXPROPRIATION—AN ATTACK "IN FORCE"—A COUNCIL OF WAR.



HERE is no need to quit the town—nay, not even the house—in which you live, to study, under perhaps the most curious aspects, the habits and industry of the Birds. In fact, whether at liberty, in a domesticated condition, or in captivity, they find themselves beset with difficulties more or less contrary to their habits and their nature. At whatever risk, and nearly always under penalty of death, they must surmount the obstacles or undergo the imperious

exigencies of the medium in which they find themselves placed. And this they accomplish with an intelligence whose wide range and great flexibility we cannot but admire. They utterly defeat the pretensions of those naturalists who assert that animals act only by instinct; that is, by a kind of innate mechanism. No; birds, like all other animals—we may even include insects—reflect and calculate, execute and combine. If, at first, they make some unskilful movement, they soon recognize their error. They have recourse to fresh manœuvres. They invent means more ingenious and better adapted to their object. Finally, with a perseverance which nothing discourages, they realize the idea which they pursue, and do not cease from their labour until after they have brought it to perfection.

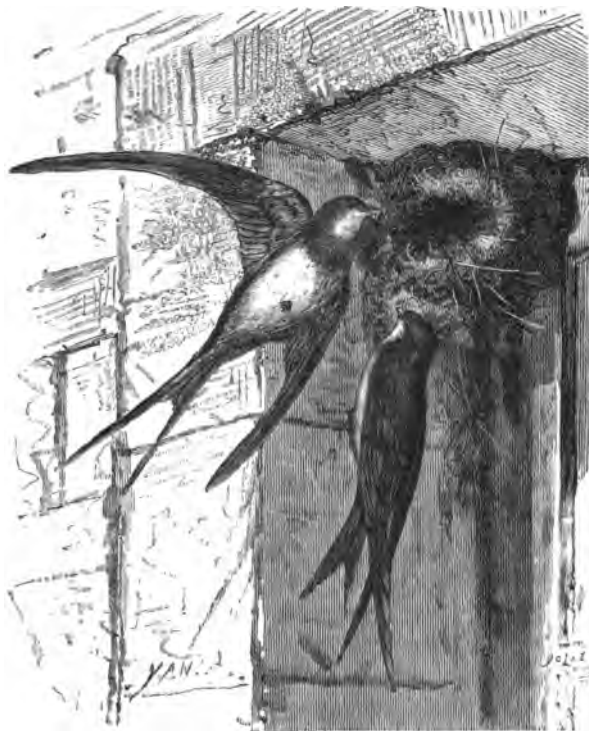
Let us see now what is passing before my eyes every minute, seated as I am at my table, in my study, and in the heart of a great city.

At this hour, for instance, the sparrows are pilfering under my windows; the swallows nestle in the angles of the walls of my courtyard; the martins haunt the chimneys, which as yet are not polluted by smoke; canaries breed in five or six cages suspended to the balconies of as many apartments; a parroquet chatters on its gilded perch; the thrushes whistle in their humble osier lodgings; gaily-coloured parrots caress each other in their aviary, even as they do amidst the forests of New Holland; I hear the strain of a captive nightingale, to which bullfinches, and tits, and warblers reply; hens, with Chanticleer at their head, fumble amongst the refuse of the stable, whose roof is frequented by a dozen pigeons; while a great black

crow, my porter's favourite, watches gravely over a little child rolling about on the ground. Not even a chicken dare approach too near the baby, for its protector bristles his feathers, and drives away the intruder with smart blows from his beak.

Of all these feathered guests of mine the sparrows are the boldest. They go everywhere, and everywhere they behave as lords and masters. The eight nests which they occupy, and which from my station I can easily count, are situated and constructed under entirely different conditions: one, a rudely-wrought heap of grasses, straw, and twigs, is planted in an angle of the coach-house, just beneath the gutter. By an ingenious arrangement, which an architect would appreciate, the constructors have placed it so that this large gargoyle, which sometimes vomits absolute avalanches of rain, cannot let fall a single drop upon their habitation; six other nests occupy some flower-pots which my groom, after enlarging the hole in their base, has suspended to the wall; while the eighth, built of earth, under a cornice of my own apartment, is a swallow's nest, which makes me the witness of a real drama.

On returning from the south, a year or two ago, a couple of swallows constructed the nest in question under this cornice, and employed nearly a week in accomplishing their task. Most interesting was it to see them go in search of little beakfuls of moist earth, knead them into little balls, roll these balls together, and bind them into a compact mass with tiny blades of straw. A mason would sometimes have been embarrassed to regulate the combinations necessary for consolidating this hemispherical mass, on one side glued to the wall, on the other projecting boldly



A MOMENT OF HESITATION.

outward. At times the swallows hesitated; at times they pulled to pieces what they had just built up; at times they were restless and disturbed, and suspended themselves by their feet as if to make sure of the real solidity of certain parts which appeared doubtful. Again, you would see them suddenly desist from their work, and fly away for a

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quarter of an hour or so, to return loaded with the materials in which they had found themselves deficient.

At the crisis of the work the female tore her foot with a bit of glass embedded in the wall. She wished, however, to continue labouring at the nearly finished nest along with her companion. But soon she was forced to relinquish, for the blood flowed freely from the wound, and it was easy to see that the poor little thing was exhausted and nearly swooning. The male then compelled her to enter the nest, and began to utter the most piercing and peculiar cries.

At this signal two other swallows, occupying a nest built in the preceding year, which they were busily repairing, flew to the spot, wheeling around the male who had called them to his assistance. The female entered the nest, discovered what was the matter, detached from the structure a pellet of the moist earth, reduced it with her beak to a very fine powder, and then applied it to the wounded foot. The poor bird soon ceased her wailings, and I doubt not slept calmly after her wound had been dressed and its pain subdued. While she slumbered the two Samaritans lent their neighbour,—may I say, a helping *hand*?—and completely finished the nest. Thereafter they flew away, returned to their own home, and resumed the repairs which had been interrupted by their benevolent action.

It was five or six days before the wounded bird recovered her health and strength.

I saw her several times dragging herself with difficulty to the entrance of the nest, and thrusting forth her pretty little head to contemplate the sky and the swarms of birds

which, more happy than herself, flew about at their ease, and were not compelled to undergo the misery of isolation and captivity.

The male, from morning to evening, was on the wing in quest of food. When he had caught about a hundred gnats, which he did in half an hour at the most, he returned home, and disgorged from his beak the produce of his chase into the beak of his female, who received it languidly, and with all the airs of an invalid.

One morning, when the male had started early, I saw the wounded one emerge completely from her nest, perch herself on one of its edges, try her foot, convince herself the wound was healed, and thereupon smooth down her feathers with a truly feminine coquetry, after which she awaited the return of the male. When she heard in the distance a certain brief cry, by which the bird habitually announced his return, she darted away to meet him. I am utterly unable to describe the happiness of the bird at this pleasant surprise. For an instant he slackened his flight, for his heart beat with emotion, but, almost immediately, recovering from his momentary agitation, he uttered little joyous cries, flew round and round his mate, and ended by soaring aloft with her into the air to assure himself of her complete cure.

Some time after this I discovered that the female had laid, on a bed of wool and feathers at the bottom of the nest, six round eggs, of a scaly white, over which she sat with the most tender solicitude, while the male bird went in quest of food for her and himself.

It was on the third day from this event that the coachman's children, finding in the courtyard a ladder left there

by some workmen engaged in painting the window-shutters of the house, planted this ladder against the wall, and, after many efforts, reached one of the flower-pots occupied as a dwelling-place by a pair of sparrows. The latter, terrified at feeling their refuge shaken by the efforts of the little marauders who endeavoured to dislodge it, abruptly took to flight, and flew hither and thither distractedly, until, recovering from their first movement of terror, they attacked the boys, and struck them in the face with their beak and wings. The boys, forced to preserve themselves from such dangerous blows, covered their faces with their hands,



A FLIGHT OF SWALLOWS.



THE YOUNG MARAUDERS.

and let go the pot, which fell on the pavement, and was dashed to pieces along with the eggs it contained.

The sparrows took refuge on the edge of the stable-gutter, and there, so long as the gathering shades of night permitted me to watch them, I saw them, dull and motionless, with their heads hidden amongst the feathers of their neck. I had flung out to them some bits of soaked bread, but they allowed them to be picked up by other birds, without making any effort to secure a share of the provision.

Next day, when I arose, my first anxiety was to look about for the sparrows which,

the evening before, I had left grieving over their compulsory expropriation and the loss of their eggs. They were no longer perched in the same place, but had hidden themselves behind the cornice of my balcony, in an obscure angle just above the swallows' nest.

I began my work, and had already written a few lines, when suddenly a strange noise interrupted me, and I dropped my pen. I leaned over the balcony, and found that the two sparrows were attacking the female swallow, who remained alone in her little home. Clinging to the nest, they struck at the poor creature, who vainly endeavoured to defend herself, and whom they ill-treated in so rough a manner that she was compelled to abandon her position. When they saw her reduced to beat a retreat, they took possession of her nest, threw out the eggs, and concealed themselves so as to block up the narrow entrance, thrusting forth their two strong beaks.

Meantime, the swallow gave utterance to despairing cries, which quickly drew around her from twenty to thirty of her neighbours and friends. Assembling on the roof of the house, they began to hold council while waiting for the male, who soon arrived. As soon as he learned what had happened, in a transport of rage he flung himself upon the nest, to reconquer it by force; but this unreflecting movement only brought upon him a couple of rude blows, and he returned swiftly towards the council of war, showing his bleeding skull, and venting loud cries of rage and vengeance.

The sparrows responded to the anathemas hurled against them with screams of insolence and irony.

The swallows, after a prolonged deliberation, flew away

in various directions, and the two victims of the robbers likewise disappeared.

Meanwhile, these robbers installed themselves quite comfortably, and with impunity, in the habitation of which they had so brutally made themselves masters. They flung out of the nest some small fragments of shell, and for the dirty and unclean bed substituted some clean fresh feathers which they picked up, alternately, in the court. I say alternately, for both of them never left the nest at the same time. While one was abroad on a plundering expedition, the other kept guard at home; at the slightest noise advanced to the entrance of the nest, barricaded it with her large head, and displayed, as a kind of palisade, her sharp and solid bill, which can pierce so well at need. At nightfall both redoubled their vigilance; they seemed evidently preoccupied, and every moment put forth their heads to note, with their little black eyes, all that transpired around them.

Suddenly I heard a violent explosion (so to speak) of the cries of birds.





CHAPTER II.

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS.

A SUMMONS TO CAPITULATE—A REGULAR SIEGE—THE COUNTER-ESCAPMENT—A WALLED-UP TOMB—PRISONERS RELEASED—A COMPACT OF FRIENDSHIP—WE MUST NOT KEEP HUNGRY SPARROWS WAITING—THE NAVIGATOR SPARROWS—A SPARROW'S CHARITY—M. ADOLPHE SAXE AND HIS PARROT.

HIS noise was produced by a hundred swallows, who were hovering around the rifled nest. They skimmed it with their wings; uttered loud sounds of menace and anger; and summoned the two sparrows to capitulate. The latter answered by screaming ever so much more loudly, by threatening them with their beaks, and sometimes even

by plucking a few feathers from the collar or wing of the boldest and most imprudent of their assailants. It was quite an impressive spectacle to see them, with their eyes on fire, swelling, bristling, repelling insult by insult, violence by violence, and resolute, under all circumstances, to retain the conquered nest.

Suddenly the swallows were silent; with a common accord they collected themselves in one large group, which formed in the sky a veritable black cloud, and then they dispersed in all directions.

The sparrows were triumphant; and the male, raising his head, saluted with an ironical air the assailants thus beating a retreat.

For my own part, I too had come to the conclusion that they had been forced to retire and leave the bandits to enjoy their conquest in peace, when, after an interval of about fifteen minutes, I heard a noise like that which masons produce in cementing the stones of a wall. Each swallow, with a pellet of moistened earth in his beak, let it fall from on high upon the nest, with a skill and an accuracy of aim I could not sufficiently admire, until quite a heap was accumulated. This served as a rampart, which permitted each bird to advance without danger, and push it with his claws over the opening of the nest, into which the half liquid matter gradually rolled, and shut it out of sight. The sparrows in vain endeavoured to repel this muddy avalanche; it augmented incessantly, and before long rendered impossible the escape of the besieged, and even every means of defence. Then the mud fell more quickly than ever, doubling the dimensions of the nest, completely blocking up the entrance, and, for greater

safety, forming in front of it a slope or talus of about an inch and a half in thickness.

This coolly meditated and coolly accomplished act of *lynching* having been successfully carried out, the swallows returned each to his own home, and a dead silence reigned around the walled-up tomb of the feathered Ugolinos.

I have never been able to see or know a suffering animal, without endeavouring to relieve it. Therefore, in spite of the original misconduct of the sparrows, I did not hesitate to carry a ladder to the spot, and demolish the prison which enclosed the little victims. I found them completely suffocated—motionless, the beak open, the eye stony, the lid wide open, the head drooping, the limbs flexible. At first I thought them dead; but gradually, by dint of cautious efforts and inflating them with air, I succeeded in reanimating them. They began to stretch out their little bodies, they cast a frightened look around them, closed their beaks, and struggled to fly through the open window; but their strength failed them, and they fell back inert upon my study-table.



RELEASING THE VICTIMS.

While these proceedings had taken place, night had gathered over the earth, a storm had arisen, and the rain fell in torrents. I closed my window; and after having done my best to make my convalescents comfortable, in a little basket filled with wadding, I placed near them some crumbs of bread, and betook myself to my library.

Early next morning, on entering my study, I found the sparrows very busy in despatching what little remained of the bread-crumbs I had scattered about on the previous evening. I opened my window, and they flew out of it precipitately; but I was not a little surprised, one or two minutes afterwards, to see them return and perch themselves on the balustrade of the balcony, and show no symptoms of fright when I approached them. It is true that my hands were full of seed, which I strewed upon the window-sill.

The confiding familiarity which the birds displayed suggested to me the idea of placing against the wall, within reach of my hand, a flower-pot filled with wadding, arranged in exactly the same way as the pots which the coachman had hung up above the stable.

The sparrows, who, from a distance, attentively watched my work, understood its object immediately; for scarcely had I finished it than they hastened to take possession of their new habitation; and thenceforth continued to retain it, without disturbing themselves in the least at my proximity.

Thenceforth we all three showed ourselves faithful to the compact of friendship we had tacitly concluded. Each morning I placed in a cup on the window-sill some crusts of bread, and a few seeds and insects; and the sparrows,

without fuss or hesitation, accepted the breakfast to which I invited them. While they pecked at it gaily, I could pass, without any fear of disturbing them, my finger over the black and brown plumage of the male, and the more modest attire of his companion. The worst that happened was one or two pecks with their beaks, intended more by way of sport than with any intention of wounding me. Nothing serious ever occurred; unless I accidentally forgot, or even delayed, the daily tribute which I had undertaken to pay to these two feathered sovereigns. Then, indeed, you might see them, if my window remained closed, striking it sharply with their bills, and recalling me to my duty by their shrill reproaches. Nor did they desist from their turmoil until they saw me coming with the basin filled to overflowing. If, on the contrary, they found the window open, but without any provisions on the window-sill, they dashed into the room, looked for me everywhere, assailed me, and spared me neither noisy reproaches nor even severe measures. If I pretended to disregard their energetic expressions, they rushed towards the cupboard where I kept my supply of seeds, beleaguered it, and would grant me no peace until they had forced me to obey them.

In time, my neighbours, as they grew more and more comfortable in their flower-pot, laid their eggs there, hatched them, and brought into the world their young; so that, one fine morning, I received a visit from eight sparrows instead of two, and the new-comers, emboldened by the example of their parents, treated me, from the moment of their first introduction, with just as little ceremony.

Do not think, however, that my friendly relations with



THE TAME SPARROWS.

this family of sparrows form an exceptional case. I could cite numerous examples of a similar intimacy.

Dr. Franklin relates that one day at Newcastle, just as a brig, loaded with a cargo of coal for Nairn, in Scotland, was about to sail, he saw two sparrows perch and install themselves upon the mast-head.

When the brig got out to sea, the sparrows, far from meditating a return to land, quickly established a familiar intercourse between themselves and the sailors, who threw crumbs of bread to them along the deck. In fact, the ship had scarcely been two

days out, before they descended to receive the largesses of the crew; and after awhile, having constructed in the highest rigging a nest with the assistance of all the bits of tow they could collect, the female laid her eggs and hatched them.

In this way they accompanied the crew for a couple of years, in about twenty voyages, during which they grew more and more intimate with the men on board. Unfortunately the brig received such grave injuries in a collision in the Tyne, that, as she was already very old, she was pronounced not worth repair, and condemned to be broken up.

Before quitting the doomed vessel, the seamen cautiously removed from the mast-head the nest of their favourite birds, and planted it in one of the fissures of an ancient, ruined, and uninhabited mansion, at some distance from the shore.

At about the same time, a lady living at Chelsea was notorious for her love of birds, of whom she bred a very considerable number. Among the tenants of her aviary was a favourite canary, whose cage was placed among the leafy trees of her garden.

One morning, while the lady was at breakfast, a sparrow flew around the cage, upon which he perched, and entered into a kind of conversation with the prisoner. In a few moments he resumed his flight, departed, but soon returned, holding a worm in his beak. He threw the insect into the cage, and disappeared. Each day thereafter, and at the same hour, he brought a similar dainty to his new friend; and things came to such a climax that the canary



THE CANARY IN THE GARDEN.

eventually refused to take his nourishment except from the sparrow's bill.

So singular a *liaison* attracted the attention of the lady's neighbours, who were witnesses of these daily visits; and some among them, curious to ascertain how far the sparrow's charity extended, also suspended the cages of *their* birds outside the window. The sparrow fed, in exactly the same manner, the new captives; but always reserved his first and longest visit for his earliest friend, the canary.

Something very similar occurred in 1855, at the house of M. Adolphe Saxe, the celebrated inventor of military musical instruments. He possessed a little green parrot—sickly, weak-limbed, and half bare of feathers. That his poor favourite might breathe a less unwholesome air than that of the workshops, which was filled with copperdust, her cage was placed among the branches of a grand old tree of Judæa, which sumptuously displayed its clusters of delicate green leaves and its flowers of rosy hue. Like all valetudinarian animals, the parrot was ingenious and adroit; so, whenever she chose, she opened her lightly-fastened cage, and fluttered about the loftier branches. By degrees, one of the numerous sparrows haunting the district was emboldened to enter, in the proprietor's absence, into a cage so liberally furnished with seeds, and to banquet upon them with all the gluttony and coolness of his race. It was not long before he never thought of taking flight, but peacefully continued his repast, even when the parrot, weary of her wanderings, returned home; so that the two birds eventually formed a strong friendship for each other. The parrot imitated, with marvellous exactness, the sparrow's cry; and made use of this means to

summon her comrade. On his part, the sparrow, in rainy or winter weather, allowed himself to be shut up in the parrot's cage, utterly disregarding the bolts shut upon him, which he knew would be drawn back in the morning.

But one fine—or, rather, one fatal—day a cat belonging to the neighbourhood pounced upon and devoured the sparrow, who, from his familiarity with the house, had not learned to be upon his guard. The parrot, not seeing him return, passed day and night thenceforth in calling upon him whom she was never more to see again, and a week afterwards she was found lying dead under the tree, whither, by a supreme effort, she had contrived to drag herself.

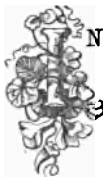




CHAPTER III.

THE SPARROW.

THE PASSIONS AND VICES OF SPARROWS—ADVENTURES OF A LITTLE SPARROW AND A LITTLE FARMER'S DAUGHTER—DISAPPEARANCE OF A SPARROW—A PARROT—ESCAPE OF A PRISONER—COMBAT—MURDER—USEFULNESS OF THE SPARROWS ILLUSTRATED—A LAW OF THE GREAT FREDERICK'S—SPARROWS' HEADS AT A PREMIUM—JUSTIFICATION OF THE SPARROWS—THEY ARE IMPORTED INTO PRUSSIA AT A GREAT EXPENSE—FLORENT PRÉVOST AND SPARROWS' GIZZARDS—ILLUSTRIOUS DEFENDERS OF THESE BIRDS—MAHOMET'S INJUSTICE TOWARDS THEM—THE SPARROW FOLLOWS MAN EVERYWHERE—THE SWALLOW—HIS MIGRATIONS—WHITHER DOES HE GO?—ERRORS ON THIS SUBJECT.



In a domesticated condition the sparrow is not long in initiating himself into the passions and even into the vices of the human species: he becomes capricious, choleric, and jealous even to frenzy.

In 1845 the little daughter of a Northern farmer picked

up at the foot of a wall a sparrow scarcely fledged, who, through some accident, had been thrown out of his nest, as not unfrequently happens. The poor creature was dying of cold and hunger. The child placed him in her bosom, warmed him, carried him home, and nourished him with bread soaked in milk, which she presented to him at the end of a slender stick. At first the sparrow languished sorely, but by very careful attention his benefactress succeeded in bringing him up, and in restoring him to health and vigour. Eventually he became a beautiful male bird, with ashy-coloured head and bluish cheeks; a reddish-brown band extended between his eyes and passed across the occiput; a black circle surrounded each eye, and from his neck downwards, and even upon his wings and tail, shone the most charming brown and gray tints over a sombre purple; finally, his broad breast was defended by a black cuirass, which brought out all the subtlety and elegance of his figure.

The bird never for one moment quitted his mistress: he perched himself upon her shoulder, or, more frequently, took refuge in her bosom, to sleep within its genial shelter. At table he clung to the back of her chair, on the watch for titbits of bread or vegetables, to which he showed himself exceedingly partial. At night he screened himself under the cross-beam of her bed, and slumbered there till morning. The moment the young girl awoke he issued from his retreat, caressed with his large black and yellow bill the maiden's lips, bathed himself in the basin where she made her toilette, smoothed his feathers, and afterwards took his share of the breakfast gaily. If she went out, he accompanied her, sometimes perched on her head, some-

times fluttering about capriciously from tree to tree, from bush to bush, always in motion, always quick, and always lively.

One fine day he disappeared, and I leave you to imagine the deep grief experienced by his young mistress, to whom he owed his life, and for whom he had always manifested so much affection.

Her friends presented her with a green parrot, and as, like all children, she was as quickly consoled as she was easily afflicted, she was be-

ginning to love the emerald bird nearly as warmly as she had loved the sparrow, whom she accused of having deserted her, when, lo! one morning she heard a succession of short hard raps against her window-panes. Hastening to open them, she was greeted by her truant favourite. Stripped of a portion of his feathers, bruised, wounded, dragging after him a string tied to one leg, he lavished the most impassioned caresses on her from whom he had been so long separated, and seemed to describe the



THE MAIDEN AND HER FRIEND.

sufferings and anguish he had undergone since the day when a wicked boy had caught him in a snare hidden behind the hedge of the farm-yard, and all the tortures he had been compelled to endure during a cruel captivity.

Need I add that his little mistress repaid caress for caress, released him from the twine which cut his leg, and supplied him with every kind of nourishment?

After devoting some minutes to the enjoyment of seeing her, and relating the grief he had experienced during his absence, he hastened to recruit his strength, and it was a pleasure to see him eagerly swallowing everything presented to him. When satisfied at last, he bathed himself with all the voluptuousness of a traveller who, after a long series of privations, finds himself once more surrounded by the comforts of civilized life. He was completing his toilette, when suddenly the parrot raised his voice, and flung forth one of those vulgar phrases which custom teaches parrots, of whatever species they may be. Immediately the sparrow darted against him, attacking him with his bill, without regarding the blows he received in exchange—blows which soon covered him with blood. When their mistress sought to separate them, he repulsed her, bit her fingers, and at length flew away to a great elm-tree in front of the old farm-house.

She whom he had so recently obeyed in the most implicit manner, and from whom he could not be separated, now called upon him in vain. He turned a deaf ear to her cries, or responded only by flapping his wings in rage and opening a threatening beak.

On the following day the parrot succumbed to a severe



A DESPERATE ENCOUNTER.

wound in the skull inflicted by his little but desperate rival, and a servant conveyed his body to the nearest town, that it might be suitably stuffed.

When he saw the corpse carried by of the rival he had so violently hated, the sparrow returned on speedy pinions to his mistress. Confused and repentant, he implored her pardon with the tenderest and most submissive caresses, and expressed his affection so enthusiastically, that, in spite of the murder he had committed, he was received into favour.

Some time after these events, the naturalist commis-

sioned to stuff the parrot made his appearance at the farm. There was a general desire to see how the sparrow would comport himself in the presence of his defunct rival, and he was brought abruptly before it. At first he recoiled, then he puffed out his little body and rushed at the image, but almost immediately retreated. He had discovered that it was no living creature he had to do with, but simply a stuffed skin, and, ashamed and discontented, he retired into some corner of the house, and remained in solitude for the rest of the day.

The sparrow has long been, and in too many places is still, regarded as a grievous enemy to the agriculturist. Most men, however, are now sensible of an error which has caused the massacre of legions of innocent birds, and it is established as an incontestable fact that in the fields our poor sparrows do not touch the seed so long as insects are forthcoming. And, by way of compensation for their occasional pilferings, they clear the trees of caterpillars, and the country of swarms of insects of every kind, which attack the roots of the cereals, gnaw their leaves, and destroy their ears.

The great Frederick, who possessed at Potsdam a magnificent cherry orchard, saw a troop of sparrows one day settling down on his favourite trees, and attacking the finest fruit. He threw himself, as even kings can do, into a violent passion, swore that such a crime should never again be committed, and immediately issued a proclamation that he would pay a reward of six pfennings to everybody who brought him a couple of sparrows' heads.

The reader will easily understand that from this moment

a desperate war was waged throughout Prussia against the unfortunate sparrows. Heads arrived from all quarters, and in a single year the government was compelled to pay the comparatively exorbitant sum of ten thousand thalers as rewards; in the second year, one hundred thalers; and in the third, ten. Consequently not a sparrow remained in Berlin, or in any other town or village in the territories of the royal horticulturist.

The king rubbed his hands at these massacres, and felt confident that thenceforth he might eat to his heart's content of cherries which would bear no trace of hungry beaks. But, alas! immense hosts of insects covered his cherry-trees, devoured the young leaves and the flowers, and did not even respect the buds. At the same time complaints arose in all parts of the Prussian States. The crops perished as fast as they showed themselves above ground; the fruit-trees remained barren; and even the condition of the forests gave great cause for alarm. Frederick threw all the blame upon certain unfortunate agriculturists, who, he pretended, had advised him to destroy the sparrows, and issued another proclamation by which he promised to pay six pfennings for each pair of sparrows imported into Prussia.

In France, M. Florent Prévost, was the cause of the death of a great number of sparrows, but then it was for the benefit of the survivors, and to demonstrate the harmlessness of these birds, and the services they render to agriculture. A skilful sportsman, he killed hundreds of these poor creatures in the different seasons of the year—spring, summer, and early autumn. He opened their

gizzards, and found therein nothing but insects of all species: caterpillars, chrysalids, worms, crickets, gnats, butterflies, grubs, cockchafers, myriapods, and spiders.

From the end of October, however, we must own that their stomach was found filled with seed.



SPARROWS AND SPORTSMEN.

In this respect, Antiquity showed itself more prudent than we have been. Moses promised length of life and overflowing garners to those who respected the feathered auxiliaries of the agriculturist. The Egyptians placed them under the protection of Osiris, and declared their destroyers, or the plunderers of their nests, guilty of sacrilege. Pliny, Columella, Varro, and Plutarch pronounced the enemies of these "celestial" creatures to be enemies also of gods and men. On the other hand, Mahomet, whom the agriculturists of the nineteenth century very closely imitate, proscribed in his *Koran* the heads of sparrows, and ordered his followers to destroy

every tree capable of affording them a refuge. And everybody knows how deplorable is the condition of agriculture among the Moslems.

The sparrow, like the rat and the mouse, with whom, in certain respects, he possesses a kind of affinity, follows man everywhere. The first colonists of New Zealand were surprised to find their winged "compatriot" installing himself at the same time as they did in their new country. Up to the present time no one has satisfactorily explained this curious problem.

The swallow, too, is found in nearly all quarters of the globe; but then his presence is to be explained by the imperious instinct which impels him to travel; an instinct originating possibly in the nature of his food, which consists exclusively of insects.

It is needless for me to repeat the particulars that have so often been given of the arrival of the swallows in our temperate regions, and of the manner in which they afterwards desert us. I shall not show them to you concentrated, late in autumn, to the number of three or four thousand, on some roof or ancient tower, where they decide on the day of their migration, thereupon disperse, and reassemble at the appointed hour to undertake their long and perilous journey.

They depart, not in masses and all at once, but in successive detachments of one hundred to two hundred, in order not to attract the notice of birds of prey; but unfortunately the stratagem does not always prevent these brigands from surprising them on their route, and committing a terrible massacre.

Whither are they bound ?

Numerous myths have been told respecting their yearly migrations. Among other fabulists, Olaüs Magnus pretends that they bury themselves in the marshes, pools, and lakes until the return of cheerful spring ; and, according to this veracious authority, the fishermen in the neighbourhood of Upsal have caught in their nets, simultaneously with their usual draughts of fish, a great number of swallows all clustered together, belly against belly, beak against beak, claws entwined in claws ; and these, after being exposed to the air, or the warmth of a fire, have gradually returned to life, and completely emerged from their lethargy.

The Jesuit Kircher carries the story to a still greater extreme ; for he pretends that the swallows, at certain epochs, fling themselves into wells and cisterns.

Whether this was or was not the fact, Kircher might easily have ascertained ; but it is noticeable that the earlier writers on natural history accepted unreservedly whatever exaggerations were poured into their ears, and made no effort to correct them by their own personal observation. They repeated servilely the extraordinary stories told by their predecessors, generally embellishing them with some imaginary details ; and they seem to have been ignorant that the very foundation of the study of natural history is the close, careful, and impartial investigation into the habits of animals. The slightest anatomical knowledge, moreover, would have saved them from their grosser mistakes. As, for instance, had Olaüs Magnus known anything of the internal organization of the swallow, he must at once have recognized the impossibility of his

hybernation, and have treated with the contempt it deserved the monstrous story of birds captured like fishes, and resuscitated like a semi-frozen dormouse! But these men were as simple as children, and, like children, received with credulous eagerness whatever wonderful stories were poured into their willing ears.





CHAPTER IV.

THE SWALLOW.

A POPULAR AND SCIENTIFIC ERROR REFUTED BY SPALLANZANI—FISHING WITH SWALLOWS—A NEST IN A DRAWER—A NEST UNDER THE PADDLE-WHEEL OF A STEAMER—A NEST ON A BELL-WIRE—AUDUBON, THE NATURALIST, AND THE AMERICAN SWALLOWS.



IT was reserved for one of the most justly celebrated naturalists of the eighteenth century, Spallanzani, to rectify an error adopted by Aristotle, Pliny, Olaus Magnus, Aldovrand, Klein, and Linnæus,—accepted as a popular belief,—but based, as in all similar cases, on the careless observation of actual facts.

At first Spallanzani experimented on the swallows, and

he showed that these birds were no better able than other birds to support the severity of our cold winters.

Finally, chance, to which we owe so many of our scientific discoveries, brought him into the Duchy of Modena, and made him an eye-witness of a swallow-hunt, or, more correctly speaking, a swallow-fishery.

"In autumn," he says, "the swallows having grown plump and juicy, are considered a very dainty dish, and in certain countries are made the objects of a regular chase.

"The hunters easily secure them, by making them drop into the water, where they promptly suffocate them. It is easy to understand, therefore, how some of the swallows thus drowned may have been caught in a fisherman's net soon after their immersion, and so have originated the fable of their hibernating under water.

"In the midst of the marshes of the Duchy of Modena,* the hunters bank up a vast sheet of water, and over this artificial basin they extend an immense net. The hunt begins at nightfall; a rope is carried across the extremity of the swampy tongue of land lying opposite to the sheet of water, and some men, stationed at either end of it, shake it gently among the reeds, advancing slowly, and forming a curved line. At the unexpected sound, the terrified birds abandon their retreats, and perch themselves at some short distance off. Disturbed in this new asylum, they retire from it in turn; and being thus pursued from place to place, are forced at last to assemble in the patch of reeds contiguous to the basin of water. The hunters then shake the cord very rapidly, and the whole vast

* Now absorbed in the kingdom of Italy.

cloud of birds rises precipitately to gain the rushes and brambles at the other end; but the net above their heads suddenly descends, envelops them in its meshes, and drags them to the surface of the water, where, struggling vainly, they are soon suffocated."

In the month of May the swallows revisit us, resume possession of their ancient nests, which they either repair, or reconstruct with tiny pellets of soft clay, kneading them thoroughly, and forming them into a solid mass with infinite skill and patience.

It is not only in the corners of our roofs that they place their nests: if by certain proofs they are convinced that no harm is intended them, they do not hesitate to enter our houses, to build therein, and to grow quite domesticated.

One of our naturalists relates that, in Devonshire, a couple of swallows constructed their nest in the open drawer of a fir-wood table, which had been consigned to an unoccupied attic. Pennant speaks of another couple which built their nest under the wing of a dead owl, nailed, according to an absurd custom, against the door of a barn.

He tells also of certain birds which constructed their nest under the paddle-box of a paddle-wheel steamer, named *The Clarence*. It was a tug-steamer, used for towing vessels, and nearly every day steamed across the Solway from Annanwaterfoot to Port Carlisle. Though the nest was never more than eighteen to twenty inches above the water, not only did the birds rear their nest in this apparently awkward position, but also hatched their brood in it for several years following.

Madame the Baroness de Chabod, the wife of an eminent French general, informed the author of this book, that some swallows one evening established their nest in the grand corridor of the chateau where she passed her infancy. They passed the nights there peacefully, for the gates were closed about nine o'clock P.M., and not opened again until daybreak; but if, by accident, the servant entrusted with this duty chanced in the morning to be a little behind time, they showed their impatience by flying about impetuously, and uttering loud cries.

It was not long before the most entire confidence and the tenderest affection existed between the young maiden and the birds. The latter would unceremoniously take insects or any other food from their mistress's fingers, would fly to meet her if they descried her in the distance, and allowed her to climb a ladder to examine them closely, and even to touch their little ones after they had emerged from the egg.

This condition of things lasted for three years; after which the health of the mother of the future baroness inspired her family with considerable alarm. As she would not permit any attendant to watch by her at night, even in the middle of winter, a bell was set up in the chamber of her lady's-maid, and a connecting wire carried into the invalid's room. In erecting this bell, the workmen found themselves obliged to carry their "thread of brass" all along the corridor wall, and close to the lofty ceiling; and, despite of all their precautions, were forced to take it behind the swallows' nest, which they partially destroyed.

In the following May the swallows returned. Great



AUDUBON IN THE FOREST.

in the interior of the trunk half a hundred of these nests;
and more, for each hollow branch contained one."

The nest, whether placed in a tree or in a chimney, consists of small dry branches, which the bird procures in a sufficiently curious manner. If you watch a swallow while on the wing, you will see him sweeping round the summit of some tree which is perishing, or already dead. You naturally suppose him, so rapid are his movements, to be occupied in pursuing the insects on which he feeds. But, suddenly, he throws his body full against a branch, clings to it with his paws, so as to shake it abruptly, breaks it clean off, and flies away with it to his nest.

The swallow uses his saliva to fasten his rude materials to the tree, or rock, or chimney he has chosen; he arranges these materials in a circle, crosses them, interlaces them, so as outwardly to extend the edges of his work; the whole is glued together with saliva, which he spreads about, to the depth of an inch or more, the better to consolidate it. When the nest is planted in a chimney, it is generally on the eastern side, at a distance of five to eight feet from its mouth. But in the hollow of a tree, where all nestle in companionship, it is situated near the top or the bottom, according to the general convenience. The construction—frail enough, by the way—occasionally yields, either under the weight of the parents and their young, or carried away by a sudden deluge of rain, in which latter case all the birds are precipitated to the ground. The swallow lays twice in the season, from four to six eggs of a pure white.

The flight of this swallow resembles that of the European martin; but it is much quicker, though well sustained. It is a succession of rather short *beats*, except in

the season when the happy couple are anticipating their loves: then you may see them almost swimming, as it were, with motionless wings,—gliding through the air, and warbling low and somewhat shrilly, the female receiving the constant caresses of the male. At other times



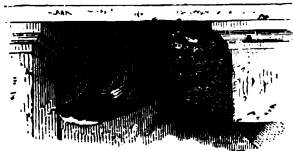
A CLUSTER OF SWALLOWS.

they hover in the open sky, far above the smoke of towns or the green crests of the forests; or, if the weather be damp, they skim along the ground, and in every little pool stir the water into foam as they drink and bathe. When about to descend into a hollow tree or a chimney,

their flight, always so swift and impetuous, is arrested, as if by some sudden spell : in a moment they swoop down, producing with their wings a noise like the distant roll of thunder. They never settle on the ground or upon trees. If you catch a bird, and place him on the earth, he makes the most awkward efforts to escape, and can scarcely move.

Audubon thinks that sometimes even in the night the parents go forth in search of food, and return with it to their young ; for he has not unfrequently heard the rustling wings of the former, and the grateful cries of the latter, on calm and serene nights.

When the little ones, as sometimes happens, accidentally fall out, while the nest retains its position, they contrive to reascend to it by means of their sharp claws, raising first one foot, and then the other, and supporting themselves on their tail. Two or three days before they are able to fly, they climb up the wall of the chimney, almost to its very mouth. An observer may easily recognize this moment, by the circumstance that the parent birds pass and re-pass above the chimney-top, and make no attempt to enter. The same incident occurs when they have been brought up in a tree.





CHAPTER V.

THE MARTIN OR SWIFT.

RESPECT FOR THE DEAD—THE MARTINS—A BIRD WHICH CANNOT FLY—
THE GREAT WHITE-BELLIED SWIFT—ITS HABITS—ITS PRESENCE IN
THE SOUTH A SIGN OF A SEVERE WINTER.



FRITZ JUNG, author of a book on birds published at Berlin, but very little known,—a book which he has entirely devoted to the record of a number of curious facts noted with truly German patience,—Fritz Jung spent a portion of his life in studying swallows. For these birds he professes an enthusiasm almost approximating to fanaticism. We must therefore recommend our readers to accept the two following facts with some degree of caution.

"A swallow, in issuing from her nest, was caught by the neck in a thread of horse-hair, which had got loose from the downy bed intended for her young brood, and thus found herself suspended in a perilous position. The poor creature was making very violent efforts to release herself, when the neighbouring swallows, attracted by the violent flutter of her wings, hastened in great numbers to her assistance. They grouped themselves tumultuously about the nest, endeavouring with their bills to rend asunder the noose which held their companion. But their aid was insufficient; no deliverance came; time passed away, and the poor bird's situation became more and more critical. A bold sparrow set to work along with the swallows, and pecked away most vigorously, but all in vain.

"In spite of upwards of an hour's perseverance, the poor patient experienced no relief; on the contrary, his movements, vigorous at first, grew very feeble; then, short and convulsive; finally, the body, still suspended by the noose, fell back, for a last time, without life or motion: the generous exertions made to rescue the unhappy bird had all proved fruitless.

"For some time the swallows still approached, and fluttered about their unfortunate companion; but, just as they were about to set foot in the nest, the motionlessness of the carcass undoubtedly revealed to their instinct the death of the victim, for all flew away, and returned no more.

"In a few minutes my window was perfectly solitary."

"A couple of swallows, having taken possession of a

nest built in front of my house the year before by other birds of the same species, found therein the dried-up bodies of four fledglings, which had accidentally perished,—no doubt of hunger. Perhaps I am right in accusing of this cruelty my neighbour, the young Baron Müller, who, as the sporting season approached, fired pitilessly upon the poor swallows, without any other justification than the need of refreshing his hand and eye: these are useless butcheries, committed as a preparation for more lucrative ones.

“The two swallows, at the sight of these corpses, held counsel: the male, piquing himself doubtlessly on his bold spirit, ventured into the nest, and even caught hold of one of the little dead birds by its leg, which, falling away from the withered body, remained in his bill. The indignant female, with a sweep of her wing, struck down the sad memorial, and flew away, calling to her companion, who followed her humbly, and as if he were ashamed of what he had just done.

“Soon I saw both of them return, each carrying in his bill a pellet of clay, with which they began to close up the entrance of the nest, and convert it into a tomb. They went forth anew to supply themselves with materials for the continuance of their pious task; nor did they attempt to build their own habitation until they had hermetically sealed up the funereal nest to shelter it from any profanation.”

Swallows are divided into several species: *Window Swallows*, *Chimney Swallows*, and *Sand Martins*; and they are distinguished easily from one another, though

there exists between them a great resemblance. The second (*hirundo rustica*) arrives in Europe before the others, feeds exclusively upon winged insects, and is remarkable for the rich reddish-brown tones of its plumage. The first (*hirundo urbica*), of a poorer plumage, and with a black bill, sets out alone in autumn, without any gathering of its congeners, and lays three times in the year. The third (*hirundo riparia*), as the Latin name indicates, frequents the river-banks, and builds his nest indifferently in the natural cavities of trees, or the chinks and fissures of the rock. If compelled by the want of any suitable locality, he will dig out his burrow close to the summit of the steepest bank, and incessantly skim with rapid wing the surface of the water, carrying on a desperate war against all aquatic insects.

The Rock Swallow (*hirundo rupestris*), indigenous to the shores of the Mediterranean, lives in the hollows of the rocks which are washed by its famous waters.

Though the *Salangane*, Chinese swallow, or *Collocalia esculenta*, does not inhabit Europe, we must not pass it over in silence. It is to this genus of swallows we owe the celebrated esculent nests which the Chinese have so long ranked among the greatest delicacies of their table, and which have recently figured in French bills of fare.

The collocalias build their nests among the rocks of the sea-coast, and cover with them the sides and roof of large caverns. They are chiefly found at a short distance from Java, and in the neighbourhood of the island of Sumatra. It is said that they occupy two months in the construction of their nests: they lay two eggs, whose

**THE HAUNT OF THE CHINESE SWALLOW.**

incubation lasts about fifteen days. It appears that they never quit the place of their birth.

The Javanese take a thousand superstitious precautions before collecting the nests of the collochia. Accustomed from their infancy to this dangerous occupation, they neglect nothing which can ensure them the protection of their gods: sacrificing buffaloes on their altars, and addressing them in prayer. They rub their body with a fragrant oil, and burn perfumes in the caverns which they arrange to explore; making use of ladders of reeds, and of torches which easily withstand the action of the gases.

The nests of the collochia, of a delicate taste, slightly perfumed, unctuous, delicate, compact, and



HUNTING FOR EDIBLE NESTS.

exceedingly digestible, are composed of a gelatinous substance, which, in form, thickness, and savour, somewhat resembles the preparations of dried artichokes which our cooks put before us as the complement of certain sauces. When they are collected, the explorers detach them from the trellis-work of thread in which they are always involved. This is composed of a less delicate substance, which melts in warm water, and is used in the composition of certain *ragouts* exceedingly popular in the Chinese Empire.

We know little of the materials, or of the processes of preparation, employed by the swallows in the construction of their nests. It is supposed, however, that they are made of sea-weeds of the genus *Gelidium*.

From swallows to martins the transition is quite natural: the latter, like the former, feed upon insects; like the former, they visit our climates and dwelling-places; and, like the former, they migrate at the approach of winter. Nevertheless, they differ from them in their organization, and in certain characteristic details.

And, first, the anatomist recognizes in them a skeleton of a peculiar form; for they are destined, so to speak, exclusively to fly. True inhabitants of the air, the martins, according to Buffon's expression, "occupy in the class of birds the exceptional position which the moles occupy among the mammals."

In fact, they never plant their feet upon the ground. If any accident throw them upon it, they are no longer able to fly, or if they succeed in making a flight, it is only after painfully reaching some slight eminence, or elevated stone, which enables them to take, as it were, a

leap, and move their long wings. On a smooth and uniformly level ground these birds, so light and agile in the air, become as heavy as a reptile.

Spallanzani, to whom we owe a great number of facts concerning the martins, asserts, however, that they contrive to raise themselves from the ground by beating against it with their feet while extending their wings, and flapping them against one another. "By this means," he says, "they describe a semicircle, low and rather narrow; then a second, at a greater height, and of greater extent; and then a third, after which they resume their customary flight. But if they happen to alight in a thicket or coppice, covered with bushes or tall grasses, these prove for them insurmountable obstacles, from the impossibility of their setting their wings in motion."

The exceptional osteology of the martins, to which we have already referred, consists of an elongated sternum, much larger behind than in front, and without slope towards its hinder edge, which furnishes many great and solid points of insertion to the muscles used in moving the wings.

Their legs are short, and their wings excessively long and narrow, on account of the rapid contraction of the pens. The shortening of the humerus, which is nothing more than a large osseous nucleus, presents nevertheless some strong ridges of insertion. The fore-arm itself is very short, and the bones of the hand (or foot), on which are implanted the pens most essential for flight, acquire, on the contrary, the *summum* of length.

A species of martin, peculiar to Savoy, the great white-

bellied Swift (*Gypselus alba*), arrives in this country towards the beginning of April. At this epoch the bird frequents the pools, around and about which she incessantly flies, beginning at daybreak ; she does not proceed to the lofty hills, her usual home, until the end of the month. She is also found in the mountains of Switzerland, the Tyrol, and the Bussel ; at Constantinople, and in the islands of Ischia, Panaria, Lipari, and Malta.



THE WHITE-BELLIED SWIFT.

You rarely come upon a single individual ; on the contrary, they fly in more or less numerous bands, and wheel to and fro incessantly, uttering loud cries, which echo and re-echo around the craggy pinnacles surmounting the precipices where they build their nests. When they retire to their lairs, it is with a simultaneous rush, like bats at nightfall. One of their curious habits consists in their suspending themselves to one another, and in thus forming a kind of oscillating and animated chain. The first bird,

by means of his claws, clings to a block of stone ; a second, coming after him, grapples, and catches hold of, *his* body ; and this process is repeated until the head of the chain can no longer endure its weight—whereupon he lets go of his rocky holdfast, and the birds disperse in all directions.

These swallows lay twice a year : the first time, three or four white and elongated eggs ; the second time, seldom more than two. The process of incubation lasts three weeks. The young, if caught before, or just as they are about leaving the nest, are excellent eating ; the old, on the contrary, and even the adult birds, have an oily taste and a leathery flesh.

The great white-bellied swift constructs his nest after two fashions. According to some observers, he builds it up of bits of straw and twig interlaced in concentric circles closely bound to one another, and strengthened by a multitude of leaves, which are made to fill up all the vacant places. According to some others, he has recourse to straw and moss fastened together with a glutinous substance, which, in drying, gives the nest the form and consistency of the nest of the collocalia.

It is to be remarked that these birds, which ordinarily frequent the higher regions of the atmosphere, fly very low on the approach of bad weather, and that their appearance in considerable numbers on our southern coasts always coincides with early frosts, and foretells a rigorous winter.

New Orleans possesses a species of swallow which, far from wearing the gloomy funereal livery of his European congener, enjoys a plumage resplendent with the richest colours : this is the *purple martin*.

The flight of this species closely resembles that of the window swallow; but, though easy and graceful, it cannot be compared for rapidity to that of the domestic swallow; but, the latter excepted, the martin can distance any bird. It is a pleasure to see him bathing and drinking while still on the wing. Through an abrupt motion communicated to the hinder part of his body, he brings it in contact with the water, raises himself a minute afterwards, and shakes himself like a dog, scattering around him a shower of pearls.

He poises himself with tolerable facility upon different trees—notably, upon willows—by making frequent movements of the tail, when he changes his place to seek for leaves, and carry them off to his nest. You may also see him frequently swooping down upon the ground, where, in spite of the shortness of his legs, he moves about with some degree of agility: he prowls around for a beetle or any other insect, marching along the brink of the pools to quench his thirst, but opening his wings a little—which he does also upon the trees, as if he did not feel completely at his ease.

Martins display a profound antipathy against dogs and cats. They attack and pursue all kinds of falcons, crows, or vultures. Finally, they hunt and harass the eagle, so long as the latter remains in sight of their nests.

"I had constructed," says Audubon, "and fastened to the end of a pole, a spacious and convenient lodging for the martins, in an enclosure near my house, where, for some years, several couples had built their nests. During the winter I placed there some other little boxes, in the hope of attracting to them the bluebird. In spring the martins

arrived, and finding these little apartments more commodious than their own, took possession of them, compelling the bluebirds to decamp. I observed the different combats which took place on this occasion, and convinced myself that one of the bluebirds was gifted at least with as much courage as his adversary; only, the martin being the stronger, he was compelled to yield up his house when his nest was almost finished; but so long as it was in his power, he missed no occasion of teasing the usurper.

"The martin put his head to the window, and contented himself with responding by cries of insult and defiance. I saw that it was time for me to interfere. Consequently, I mounted the tree to which the bluebird's nest was suspended, captured the martin, and clipped his tail with my scissors, in the hope that this mortifying punishment would produce a good effect, and induce him to return to his quarters. Not at all: I had no sooner let him loose than he went straight to his box and re-entered it. I caught him a second time, and clipped the point of each wing—in such a manner, however, that he could always fly in quest of nourishment. Then I set him again at liberty. But all his punishments proved ineffectual; and, in spite of my efforts, the obstinate martin reinstalled himself in my box. Then, in a rage, I seized him, and treated him in such a manner that he never returned to trouble the neighbourhood.

"At the house of one of my friends in Louisiana, the martins had seized upon some hollows in the cornices, and there had trained up their broods for several successive years; until, at last, the insects which they introduced along with themselves determined the owner to inaugurate

a complete reform. He sent for some carpenters to cleanse the place and close the openings through which the swallows entered. This was soon done. The martins appeared in despair: they brought supplies of tiny branches and other materials, and began to build their nests afresh, in any part of the building where a hole remained. But they were hunted up so closely, that, after numerous attempts, the season being far advanced, they were constrained to abandon their design, and withdrew to the outskirts of the plantation, to some hollow trees which had formerly been occupied by woodpeckers. In the following spring, my friend built an asylum expressly for them; which is a very common practice in America, where the martin is looked upon as a privileged traveller, and as the forerunner of spring.

"The martin's voice is not melodious, though pleasant. We like particularly to hear the warbling of the male when courting the female.

"The Indians eagerly seek the companionship of the martin. Frequently they suspend a calabash to a tree growing near their camp, and with downy feathers work up a nest, in which a martin never fails to install himself. In this calabash the bird plays the part of sentinel, and rushes forth to protect from the attack of the vulture the goat-skins or pieces of venison which the savages have exposed to the air to dry.

"The Southern negroes are equally delighted to bring up the martin; they carefully empty a calabash, and attach it to the flexible extremity of a reed planted near their hut.

"In the country, nearly every inn has a box of martins



RETREATS OF THE SWALLOWS.

on the summit of its signboard; for men say that the handsomer the box, the better is the inn.

“Every town, too, has these boxes; and we may fairly say that the martin is a privileged bird, since even pilfering children do not attempt to disturb him. He glides tranquilly along the streets, gobbling up here and there a gnat or fly, clinging underneath the gutters, throwing an inquisitive glance into the interior of the houses, or balancing himself on his wings in front of their casements; or he rises high into the air, sporting with the strings of flying kites, which, as he passes by, he strikes with rapid wing, never missing his aim; then, suddenly, he returns to skim the roofs, driving away the cats, who retire at the first summons.

“In the Central States, the martin begins to build a new nest—if he is not content with repairing and enlarging that of the preceding year—eight or ten days after his arrival; that is, about the 20th of April. He works it

up with dry sticks, twigs of willow, blades of grass, green or dry leaves, and all the hairs or rags which he can collect; the female lays in her new abode from four to six eggs of a pure white. Several couples retire into the same box to lay, and the little community seem to live in perfect harmony. They generally rear two broods per season: the first is hatched at the end of May; the second, towards the middle of July. Nevertheless, as I have said, in Louisiana they have sometimes three. The male hatches in his turn, and lavishes the tenderest cares upon the female. He warbles incessantly, perched outside her retreat, or constantly passes and re-passes before the entrance. His notes, at this moment, are emphatic and prolonged, but low and even less musical than his common *piou-piou*.

"These birds feed only upon insects, and, among others, upon cockchafers; they seldom attack the bee."





CHAPTER VI.

THE CANARY.

THE CANARY—THE CAGE IN THE ATTIC—THE LITTLE ONES—THE CHICK-WEED-VENDOR—MOTHER ROSE—WALTER RALEIGH AND QUEEN ELIZABETH—TRANSFORMATION OF CANARIES—A FUGITIVE CANARY—THE CINI OF PROVENCE—CANARIES' DOCTORS—A BREED OF CANARIES.



FRENCH author asserts that in no other city in the world do the people love, as at Paris, flowers and birds. The very poorest have their pot of mignonette, their rose-tree, their plants climbing up a wire or trellis-work around their windows; and happy are they when they can suspend underneath these leafy and living garlands a cage inhabited by a couple of canaries. For the numerous

widows left in sorrowful solitude—the workwomen who have grown old in daily toil—the young girls who begin, surrounded by perils, deceptions, and chagrins, that life of an operative in which beauty is nearly always a misfortune,—a bird is a source of distraction, of pleasure, and, sometimes, of consolation. All these poor, lonely creatures, lost in

the midst of the great city, find themselves less lonely when, returning home, they are welcomed by a friendly cat, or by two pretty little birds with flapping wings. And then there is the mother, in whose nest we discover, one fine morning, some eggs which she hatches, and whence, after many attempts, emerge three or four tiny creatures with large eyes and bare body, but who seem to their protectress



THE WORKWOMAN'S PLEASURE.

nearly as beautiful as to the mother herself.

How many cares the new-born require, and how pre-occupied and happy one feels in associating one's-self with their little wants! in cutting up hard eggs, mixing with them bruised seeds, to watch that neither cold nor heat,

nor currents of air, nor neighbouring cats, do injury to this beloved brood! How one is recompensed for one's trouble when the little birds, growing towards maturity, begin to perch on the bars of the cage, to fly through the garret-window, to come at the word, boldly and without hesitation, and to take a bribe of biscuit from one's fingers, as one presents it, full of emotion, and with a heart almost palpitating! See, too, the cage is kept in proper order; the little sacramental basin is filled daily with fresh water; and a thick layer of chickweed, renewed every morning, stretches above the birds an ever-fresh canopy of verdure.

Chickweed, in many parts of London and Paris, is a regular article of commerce, supplying a large number of poor people with the means of living. At early dawn, a harsh voice proclaims the vicinity of the chickweed-vendor, and at the sound the eager buyer descends some five or six stories to receive, in exchange for a halfpenny, a handful of the herb to which canaries are so very partial.

The vendor, says Berthoud, who supplies with chickweed the inhabitants of my district, has carried on this trade for twenty years. Left an orphan when only nine years old, she made her appearance one morning, half-clothed and shoeless, and crying with a cracked voice, frequently half-choked with tears, "Chickweed for the poor little birds!"

We interested ourselves in this poor child, who, at day-break, alone, without family, without protection, went to the market to purchase her clumps of herbs, which she afterwards sold in the *Chaussée-d'Antin* for the sake of

gaining a few sous. Charity is fertile and ingenious in Paris, especially among those who dwell on the borders of poverty. Shoes, therefore, were found for the child; she was dressed in a black gown, that she might do honour to her mother's memory; and an artist, having met, perhaps, with some extraordinary good fortune, rented for her use

an attic, of which he paid a year's rent in advance. Since that date, nothing has changed in the condition of this laborious creature, except that the child has developed into a woman. Every morning she repairs to market, no matter what the weather, no matter what the season; she returns to her "beat," traverses it, cries and sells chickweed up to noon; the rest of the day she passes in her garret, sewing some coarse articles of needle-



THE CHICKWEED-VENDOR.

work, cooking her dinner, and making her apartments shine with cleanliness, though the only light which enters it is through a casement half blocked up by a small cage full of birds.

The latter are both a source of enjoyment and a means of additional income. She possesses the finest Dutch canaries ever seen in Paris. The King of the Belgians, who, when a boy, was passionately fond of canaries, and

sumptuously maintained a complete flock of them, just as other princes keep up a stud of horses, never possessed any to surpass them. The bird-vendors of Paris supplied themselves with canaries, to re-sell at a high price, from Mother Rose's; for such is the name of this woman who, though barely thirty-two years old, seems upwards of fifty, her fatigues and cares having aged her before her time.

Abstemious, and drinking nothing but water, she speaks with the hoarse voice of the drunkard, through constantly crying her "chickweed" about the streets. Her form has grown bent and crooked under the weight of the basket continually attached to her shoulders; her hair has grown white through the severities of the weather; her legs are twisted through excessive walking. But what do these things matter, provided she punctually pays her rent; that "trade goes well with her;" that epidemics (as too often happens) do not ravage her cages; and that she is able, before commencing her hard day's work, to enter church for a moment, uttering a brief but devout prayer; and later in the day, as the hour of repose approaches, to join in the evening services, which unite a few pious persons before the parochial altar? For Mother Rose is devout; and not only devout, but charitable. She has repaid a hundredfold, in gifts to poor abandoned children, the alms which formerly succoured her own infancy; and if any one in her neighbourhood is taken seriously ill and has no attendant, Rose passes the night by their bedside until break of day. Then she quits them to buy and sell her chickweed; and, certes, to see how gaily she tramps along the streets, you would never suppose she had not closed her eyes for four and twenty hours.

Though Mother Rose can neither read nor write, and possesses more heart than intelligence, I can assure you that the time spent in listening to her is not wasted, provided you talk only of canaries. She has learned a thousand curious particulars in reference to the manners, habits, instincts, and passions of these favourite birds; she has made a thousand curious and subtle observations wholly unknown to the princes of ornithological science—may my readers forgive me the use of that ugly Greek word!

The importation of canaries into Europe does not date further back than the sixteenth century. A golden cage, filled with these birds, was one of the marvels which Sir Walter Raleigh brought back from the Fortunate Islands, and presented to Queen Elizabeth.

These birds, of a gray nearly as deep as the gray plumage of the European linnet, did not at first gain much attention from their royal owner, and her only remark was,—

“To come from such a distance, they are not very beautiful!”

“Will your majesty,” said Raleigh, “suspend your judgment until you have heard the little musicians sing?”

And the birds, as if they understood the famous adventurer’s words, immediately began to warble, with sweet clear voice, an air very popular at that period, which Sir Walter Scott quotes in his admirable romance, “The Heart of Mid-Lothian,”—

“I was in the shade, and I have seen the sun of England.”

Thenceforth the canaries became the favourites of the queen, who allowed no one to assist her in the offices of

care and affection they required. And she was recompensed by the numerous broods the birds produced, and still more by a singular change which the plumage of the canaries underwent in the royal aviary. Imperceptibly they lost their sombre colours; and five or six years afterwards they all of them wore a livery of pale gold, which led to their being called "golden birds." Men never miss the proclamation of a miracle; and Shakespeare, in one of his poems, alludes to this wonderful transformation as due to the glances of a sovereign more powerful to create gold than the sun of the Atlantic!

Elizabeth not unfrequently distributed



THE QUEEN AND HER CANARIES.

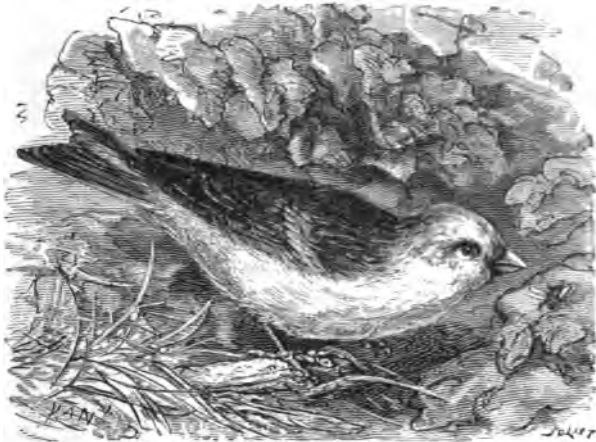
among her favourites the products of her aviary, and her courtiers disputed eagerly the honour of a gift so rare and so highly precious. In the Anglesea family is still preserved one of the royal birds, duly embalmed and stuffed, with a little golden ring attached to one leg, bearing the queen's monogram.

Nowadays the canary, having become purely democratic, figures but little in the palace, and swarms in the garret. He is, however, a lively, active, and brilliant bird, who never thinks of conquering the liberty he has never known; for he has been born, has lived, and has died, for three hundred years, generation after generation, in the habits of captivity. Therefore I know nothing more pitiful than to see a canary, who has accidentally broken loose from his cage, wandering sadly along the roofs—anxious, awkward, afraid, ignorant where to find a refuge or whither to go for food. Usually he terminates his difficulty either by returning of his own accord to the deserted "home," or by demanding an asylum at some strange casement, which very rarely remains closed against him.

Yet it is to the fugitive canaries, which have escaped from their cage and returned to the habits of savage life, that naturalists attribute the origin of the *cini*, or "green canary of Provence" (*fringilla serinus*).

He inhabits parts of Italy, Spain, Germany, and France, from Provence to Burgundy, rarely venturing towards the north. He retains only on his head, throat, and the upper part of his tail, the traces of his beautiful yellow livery, due to the domestication of his ancestors; the rest of his plumage is of a greenish hue, and streaked with longi-

tudinal lines of a velvety brown. These colours are not modified by captivity, except after a lengthened period. His song consists of a sharp, strong, continuous, but modulated cry, which is heard only at his time of wooing.



THE CINI.

He builds his nest among the brooms, green oaks, and fruit-trees; and the female deposits therein four or five eggs, marked, on their larger end, with a circle of brown or reddish spots. Finally, like the exotic canary, he feeds on tiny seeds, groundsel, and the leaves and flowers of chickweed.

The domestic canary, like too many other animals associated with the life of man, is subject to many infirmities and diseases from which, in a state of freedom, he would undoubtedly be exempt—epilepsy, gout, and cutaneous

eruptions. Many men of science, therefore, have issued ponderous volumes on the art of healing the canary. Among these we may quote Hervieux, author of a quarto volume, published in 1713, and entitled "*Traité des Maladies des Serins*;" and the Père Bougot, for whose "*Art d'élever et de guérir les Serins*" bibliophilists are ready to give its weight in gold. Whatever may be the therapeutic course adapted to canaries, we are not to look upon them as *delicate* birds. They endure the severities of our winter as well as the most robust birds of our climates.

The Dutch, whose sky is absolutely wanting in sunshine, and whose climate is equally deficient in geniality, rear their canaries in the open air, and boast of possessing a very beautiful breed. Many of their enthusiastic amateurs allow them almost perfect liberty. Let me quote M. Van Moersen's description of an aviary which he possesses at a distance of three or four miles from Amsterdam :—

"A verdurous lawn stretches down a gradual declivity to the threshold of a large park which opens upon almost boundless perspectives. To the house is attached a plantation of fine shrubs, very carefully tended. It surrounds the house with evergreens. To the left—immediately beyond the flower-garden, and in a sheltered corner—lies a basin of water overshadowed by trees, round and about which the birds assemble to enjoy its freshness.

"Day and night the canaries live in perfect freedom in this El Dorado: they build their nests, they hatch their eggs, they rear their young, they disport and they sing.

"Sometimes a nest is accidentally discovered immediately beneath a window-sill. You may pass your finger



AN AVIARY IN HOLLAND.

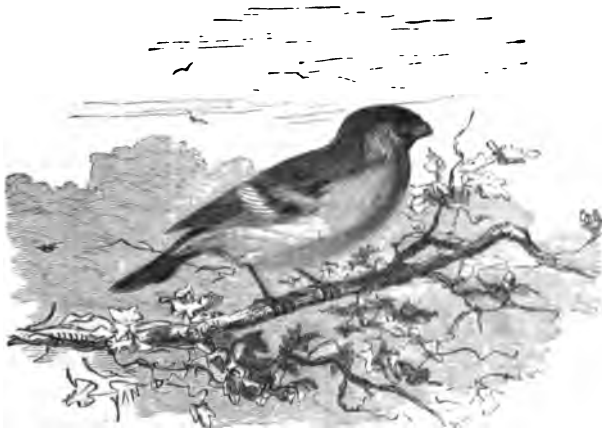
over the back of the sitting mother without terrifying or disturbing her. When the little ones are three or four

days old, she seems even delighted to see *them* caressed. I know nothing more charming than the spectacle of these pretty little creatures of all shades and all colours bringing up their young; while the fathers, perched on the neighbouring bushes, sing their sweetest strains.

"The musical faculties of the canary, developed in an open park or in a leafy clump of shrubs and bushes, are something quite fresh and novel to those who have heard him only in captivity. Nothing equals the purity, the energy, the variety of which they give abundant proof.

"The canaries, with me, are allowed free admission into the house: they eat at the table, hover on the shoulders of my daughters, and are quite at home. However, we supply them with an abundance of food in a great cage, which we station on the lawn, and into which they enter through various openings."





CHAPTER VII.

THE BULLFINCH.

THE BULLFINCH—HIS VALUE—HOW HE MAY BE TAUGHT TO SING—THE TYROLEAN BULLFINCHES—THEIR LEGENDARY ASSOCIATIONS—THE BIRD-SELLER—M. DE ROTHSCHILD—BIRDS MATING—DIFFERENT SPECIES OF BULLFINCHES—MARRIAGE OF THE BULLFINCH AND CANARY—A BULLFINCH IN THE DOUAI LYCEUM—LIBERTY OR DEATH—THE ORNITHOLOGICAL DIAL.



TWENTY years or thirty years ago, you rarely saw a caged bullfinch. To-day we meet with a certain number,—especially among the wealthy in the artist-world,—where large sums are paid for the costly gratification. Some bullfinches cost as much as from £12 to £20 a piece.

We must add that these bullfinches are admirable

singers, and warble seven or eight distinct melodies with an accuracy of intonation and a delicacy of taste bordering on the marvellous. If they are encouraged to sing by a curious method—namely, by your standing before them and nodding your head like a Chinese joss—you will see them swelling and expanding, and gently moving their head, opening wide their wings, and then, with half-closed eyes, running through the modulations of German songs and Tyrolean melodies with wonderful expertness.

They sing in this way throughout the summer, and remain silent from the end of autumn until the beginning of spring. When earth's renewal-time approaches, you may hear them cackling in a low voice, and endeavouring to recall to memory the airs forgotten in the inaction of the winter season. They repeat them note by note, recommence them every time they make a mistake, never weary of their exercise, and devote themselves to it with a truly artistic perseverance until they reconquer their whole repertory. Once this success is obtained, nothing checks them, and nothing can silence them; they sing all day; they sing even during the night; and a month or two passes by before they can temperately make use of their musical knowledge.

Every year a Tyrolean peasant brings to Paris half a hundred of these charming birds. Formerly he accomplished the journey on foot, his shoulders loaded with cages suspended to poles, each cage containing a bullfinch; to-day he travels by rail, and travels accompanied by a charming little *blonde*, his wife, who speaks French nearly as well as German, and whom you are sure to meet with three times a week at the opera, during the early part of May,

hidden rather than seated in an arm-chair in the upper gallery. She yields herself up unreservedly to the emotions awakened by the music, and sometimes furtively presses her husband's hand to thank him for the pleasure she enjoys in listening to the melodies of *Guillaume Tell* or *Les Huguenots*.

A curious accident made the fortune of this happy couple. Some twenty years ago, during a tour made by Baron Rothschild in the Tyrol, and while a fresh relay of horses was being put to his carriage, a young and well-favoured peasant offered him a very ordinary-looking cage, containing a bird of somewhat dismal-looking plumage. The baron at first put aside



BULLFINCHES FOR SALE

with his hand an object so ill adapted for conveyance in a travelling-carriage; but he quickly changed his intention when he heard the bullfinch begin to sing, without one false note or imperfect intonation, the *Cachucha*, and then some German national airs.

"What do you want for this bird?" said he to the peasant.

"A florin, your Excellency."

"This will do better," answered the financier; and he placed in the peasant's hand, who opened his eyes as if in a dream, three or four pieces of gold.

"Have you any other bullfinches equal to this?" inquired Baron Rothschild, as he smiled at the poor lad's ecstasy.

"Sixty, your Excellency. I constantly rear them for sale to travellers, who, unfortunately, do not pay me so liberally as your Excellency. Otherwise I would marry Gretchen, whom I have loved for two years, and whose father refuses me because I have nothing in the world but a hut and my birds."

"I return to Paris in a month. Here is my address; come and call upon me."

And the post-chaise went off at a rapid gallop, leaving the young peasant overwhelmed with emotion.

Exactly a month afterwards our Tyrolean, with his sixty cages on his shoulders, arrived in the Rue Lafitte, entered, all dusty and travel-soiled, the hotel of M. de Rothschild, and asked to speak to the master of the house, whose card he showed.

While the Swiss in waiting hesitated whether he should conduct so singular a visitor into the baron's presence, it

chanced that the baron appeared at the window of his private room, and seeing the Tyrolean, whom he recognized by his apparatus of cages, he ordered him to be admitted.

"Your Excellency," said the traveller, in German, "you invited me to come; and I am here. Permit me to offer you this bullfinch, which is much more learned than the bird you bought of me at home. He can sing twelve different airs."

And immediately he nodded his head before the bird, who began imperturbably his series of twelve songs, and adhered rigorously to the programme.

M. de Rothschild ordered a sum of £20 to be paid to the bird-trainer, and that he should be conducted to a small hotel in the neighbourhood; adding that he undertook to discharge the expenses of his Tyrolean friend.

Soon all the talk of Paris was about the "musicianly" bullfinches. They were seen, and heard, and admired at the celebrated banker's, and everybody wished to procure the like—it mattered not at what cost. The Tyrolean, therefore, soon started again for his mountains, still on foot, but without any cages, and carrying £240 carefully hidden in his belt.

Two hundred and forty pounds represent a large fortune in the Tyrol. Our bird-trainer speedily married his Gretchen; and as Gretchen attained her sixteenth year on her wedding-day—that is, in 1866—and as, both as mountain-born and blonde, she appeared even younger than she really was, you will easily understand how, at the Opera, everybody turned to admire her luxuriant tresses, her delicate fea-

tures, her coquettishly *retroussé* nose, her elegant figure, and beautiful little hands.

Some slight differences exist between the form and plumage of the French bullfinch and the Tyrolean; but the former, if properly trained, will likewise develop into a skilful singer.

And yet, in his untamed condition, he raises his voice only to utter a kind of whistle, and a sad and plaintive cry common to both sexes. Naturally timid, he keeps himself concealed in the shadiest and most sequestered corners, where you cannot very easily discover his little nest—planted, as it almost always is, at the bottom of a bush, and even in the thick yoke-elm hedges of parks and plantations.

This nest, as supple as it is light, is composed of tiny bits of wood twisted and interlaced, and covered with slender roots. The female lays five or six eggs of a bluish white, marked at their larger extremity with a circle of brown and violet spots: the process of incubation lasts about fourteen or fifteen days; and two months suffice for the little ones to grow strong enough to quit their mother and take flight from the parent-nest.

The German bullfinch, to which is given the popular name of *cramoisi*, and which naturalists call *pyrrhula erythrina*, differs from the French species in that he builds upon the loftiest forest-trees, that his chest is covered with a cuirass of brownish-red, and that the female lays greenish eggs.

The French bullfinch (*pyrrhula*) is recognizable by the



BULLFINCHES IN A WOOD.

black cap which covers his head ; his robust bill, which is convex rather than conical ; his upper mandible, which is

longer than the lower; his round nostrils, opening under tiny feathers directed outwards; and his blunted wings, of an ashen gray on the upper, and a deep red on the lower surface. During the year he feeds upon black fruits, and upon seeds, which he does not eat until he has stripped them of their husks; in spring he gathers and eats the first buds of the fruit-trees, and especially of the apple.

The bullfinch is found in all parts of the world, except in New Holland, where hitherto the depredations he commits in the orchards have prevented the colonists from acclimatizing him, as they have acclimatized the majority of our indigenous birds, and even the sparrow. To America, Asia, and Africa belong their peculiar species, which vary from ours by slight differences of form, and particularly of colour. The one differing most from his French brother is the *bullfinch parroquet* (*pyrrhula falcirostris*), of an olive-coloured plumage, which belongs to Brazil, and whose characteristically protuberant bill resembles the bill of a parrot.

Bird-catchers sometimes contrive to obtain the young of the bullfinch and the canary, which are held in high esteem by amateurs. Their garb partakes to some extent of the maternal colours, and they are all the more indefatigable as singers since nature has interdicted them the reproduction of their species.

Caught when young—when still in the nest—the bullfinch is very easily tamed, and accustoms himself perfectly to the habits and taste of persons who rear him with kindness. In my childhood I possessed one of these birds, which would not leave me for a moment, although, when

he chose, he could fly to the crests of the stately trees which, at that epoch, flourished in the courtyard of the Lyceum of Douai. He generally nestled down between



THE NEW SCHOLAR.

the collar of my waistcoat and my tunic, accompanied me to my classes, and followed me to the schoolroom, where he conducted himself in such a manner as never to arouse

any disturbance, or justify the command that I should put him away, a command which I had not failed to receive.

One evening, when I was enjoying a walk out-of-doors, and he was disporting himself on the top of my hat, a bird of prey, stimulated by hunger, suddenly and audaciously skimmed my shoulder, seized the bullfinch in his claws, and flew off with his prey.

At the loud screams I uttered a comrade, who was



RESCUED.

amusing himself with his bow, let loose an arrow at the winged robber with so much address that the latter fell down at our feet stricken to his very heart. It was with much difficulty we detached his claws from the poor agonized bullfinch, but happily he was still alive, in spite of the serious wounds he had received ; wounds which we succeeded in healing.

If caught in a snare, the adult bullfinch, however gentle you may wish to make his captivity, refuses to eat, and wrestles against fate within his secure imprisonment. If he does not contrive to break his head against the bars of his jail, he perishes before long of famine, resembling in this respect the last of the Indian chiefs, Osceola.

Osceola, in 1832, had repaired to a conference demanded by the Americans on the plea of negotiating a peace, and without any regard for their pledged faith or the laws of humanity, they seized on the Blackfoot warrior, and shut him up in a citadel.

"You are traitors and cowards," the captive said to them; "but I know how to release myself in spite of your fetters."

And, in truth, a fortnight later he was free, for he was dead.

The bullfinch is one of the birds which Linnæus places in his "Ornithological Dial."

According to that celebrated naturalist, the nightingale sings all night.

The chaffinch is the earliest of all the winged musicians, and with his chant anticipates the dawn. He may be heard at about half-past one or two o'clock.

A little later—that is, about half-past two—the black-cap warbler pipes forth a strain which would rival that of the nightingale if it lasted longer, and was not composed of such short stanzas.

At half-past two to three o'clock the quail, hidden among the barley-rows, utters some little sounds, half

clucking, half crying, which the peasants interpret to mean, "Pay thy debts! pay thy debts!"*

Next comes the bullfinch, who sings his loves to a melancholy measure, broken up, as I have said, with whistlings and murmurings.

From half-past three to four the red-bellied warbler flings forth boldly, and with all his strength, his harmonious trills.

At half-past three and four we also hear the thrush or merle. Not only has he a song peculiarly his own, but he will learn very cleverly any tune he accidentally hears. Every merle in a district inhabited by M. Dureau de la Malle sang the *Marseillaise*; all he had had to do was to teach the melody to a captive merle, and afterwards set him at liberty.

From four to five o'clock comes the turn of the *pouliot*.

From half-past four to five the black tomtit grinds away with his exasperating voice.

And, finally, from five o'clock to half-past five the sparrow squeals and squalls.

* In Germany the quail's song is said to mean, "Pray to God."





CHAPTER VIII.

THE CARRIER-PIGEON.

CARRIER OR PASSENGER-PIGEONS—THE UNKNOWN OF THE TUILERIES—A FRIEND LOST AND A FRIEND RECOVERED—HABITS OF THE WILD PIGEON—THE CARRIER-PIGEONS OF AMERICA—AUDUBON'S NARRATIVE—CLOUDS OF PIGEONS—THEIR NUMBERS—THE AMOUNT OF FOOD THEY CONSUME DAILY—THE CHINESE WHISTLERS.



ABOUT twelve years ago, a man who had seen fully fifty winters, sufficiently meanly clothed, and apparently a foreigner, attracted notice by his persistent habit of installing himself in the gardens of the Tuileries from the moment the gates were opened until the hour for shutting them arrived.

Seated on a bench near the private enclosure, which, in

its imitation of the English garden, contrasted so curiously with the pretentious magnificence of Le Nôtre, he lived there like a lodger in his hired apartment. If he felt athirst, he pulled a flask from his pocket and drank a few mouthfuls. Was he hungry?—he dipped into a small basket which he always carried in his hand, and breakfasted or dined without paying the least regard to the curious crowd that never fail to assemble around any eccentric character or unusual object. And lastly, if he felt in want of sleep, he stretched himself unceremoniously on his bench, and enjoyed a sound nap. Neither rain nor sunshine could compel him to quit his place. He sheltered himself under an old umbrella, which at need served him instead of a parasol; or else, absorbed in a profound reverie, he received torrents of water or floods of burning sunshine, without appearing to notice them. On a severe winter day, he still retained his accustomed seat, covered with snow, and half buried under its white and frozen layer.

The keepers of the gardens were annoyed at first by the presence of this singular individual, and would fain have prohibited him from entering the Tuileries. He obeyed so sadly, that at last they could not but compassionate the "original," who presented himself every day, in spite of their prohibition, and who, moreover, was so completely inoffensive, neither giving trouble nor causing scandal. They referred the matter to their chiefs, and the latter authorized them to let the poor wretch have his way.

About a fortnight after he had taken triumphant possession of the gardens, it was observed that flocks of spar-

rows, and especially of pigeons, gathered from all quarters so soon as the mysterious stranger had seated himself on



THE STRANGER OF THE TUILERIES.

his bench. They began by picking up at his feet the crumbs he liberally let fall; and gradually growing bold and confident, they perched themselves on the bench,

climbed the old man's knees and shoulders, and even took from his mouth the bread he had masticated. And not only did he encourage them in this, but little by little he took an interest in the confidence the birds displayed, and formed an intimate friendship with them. Sometimes he would carefully and delicately take them in his hands and caress them, without their showing the slightest terror; sometimes he threw pellets of bread into the air, which they seized on the wing with marvellous address. At night-fall, when the drummers, beating the "retreat," gave the signal of departure to the promenaders, sparrows and pigeons formed a procession in honour of their friend, conducted him as far as the gate which opens on the quay, near the Pont-Royal, halted at the gate, where they ranged themselves in long rows, and saluted with their cries the unknown stranger, who turned at every step he took, and paused to wave an adieu with his hand.

In this way two or three years passed by. One morning the birds grouped themselves, according to custom, around the well-known seat, and waited for the friend who always made his appearance with hands and pockets full of abundant provender. Alas! he came neither that day nor on successive days. And as no one knew his name, nor the district where he lived, the *habitués* of the Tuileries were reduced to all kinds of vague conjectures respecting the disappearance of this singular personage.

Whatever may have been its cause, it was not long before a successor was found in his mission of anxiety and friendship for the birds: and soon an old lady came and took the vacant place upon the bench. At first, on her

appearance all the birds flew away ; but before long—tempted by the seeds and crumbs which she liberally scattered around her—they returned without hesitation, and cemented with her, so to speak, relations exactly similar to those which had formerly existed between them and the unknown.



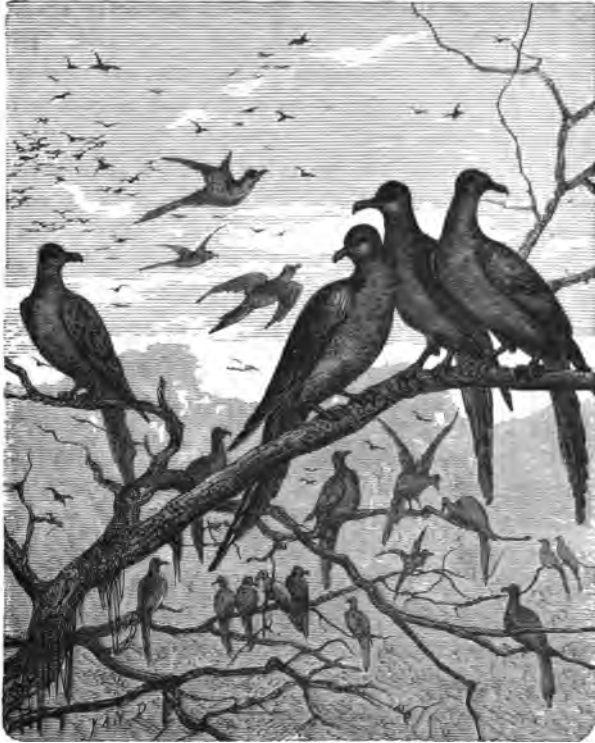
A NEW VISITOR TO THE TUILERIES.

The pigeons inhabiting the groves and gardens of the Tuileries, and showing themselves always so trustful and familiar, have lost, thanks to their contact with man, nearly all the habits which characterize them in their wild state of life ; not only do they build their nest by

the side of the crow, their cruellest enemy in the forests, but they do not migrate in October; they spend their winter in Paris, assured that provisions will not fail them.

In those localities other than the Tuileries or the Luxembourg—where scenes take place such as I have now just described—the pigeons feed upon acorns, beech-nuts, and strawberries, of which they are passionately fond. When these provisions are wanting, they attack different species of seeds and the young shoots of different plants: they swoop down, in numerous bands, on newly-sown ground or on the growing crops, and cause there a very considerable damage. In one respect they resemble many species of the *gallinacæ*; they seek their food at regular hours, and remain idle nearly all the remainder of their time. In these moments of *far niente*, they love to perch upon the branches stripped of verdure which spring from the crests of the loftiest trees. On fresh clear mornings you may see them, about sunrise, motionless for whole hours, and waiting until a ray of sunshine, falling upon their stiffened wings, gives them a little suppleness and vigour. In the summer season they disport among the leafy trees, and there they build their nests.

The share respectively taken by male and female in the construction of the nest deserves to be particularized. Its situation is always chosen by the female. This done, she alone puts together the materials with which the male supplies her. She never moves from the branch where she designs to lay the foundations of her home, while her mate is always on the wing, and examines every neighbouring tree. When he catches sight of any dead twigs still



PIGEONS AT REST.

clinging to their trunk—for he never collects those lying upon the ground—he selects one, seizes it with his claws, or sometimes with his bill, and endeavours to pluck it away, either by bringing to bear upon it all the weight of his body, or by repeatedly and strenuously pulling at it. So soon as he succeeds, he carries it off, and places it at

the disposal of the female. Then he flies away again; and so, for hour after hour, continues at his task. His part, you see, is the collection of materials; the more intellectual work of using them to the best advantage is undertaken by the female.

Her construction, however, is not a work of peculiar art. Rude and unsubstantial, it does not always last even until the young birds are strong enough to take their flight and dispense with the parental cares. If an accident happens, and the nest falls into ruin, the strong branches on which it is almost invariably planted, offer a support to the young pigeons.

The female generally lays a couple of eggs, entirely white. Incubation lasts fourteen days; and in about the same time the little ones are able to fly and to provide for themselves. While their offspring are growing up, the parents supply them with food at regular hours; for the pigeon professes in all things a methodical regularity. About eight o'clock in the morning the little pigeons receive their first repast; their second between three and four in the afternoon. During their earlier days, the mother does not leave her young ones, but warms them beneath her wings; afterwards she hovers about their vicinity, and keeps near enough to watch their movements. The male, who indicates his presence by a loud but plaintive cooing, assists her, and at need takes a part in this twofold duty.

A considerable number of passenger-pigeons arrive in Southern France towards the end of October; and our sportsmen immediately begin an eager, and often productive, campaign against them.

Audubon has devoted one of the most interesting chapters of his "Scenes of Nature" to the carrier-pigeons of America.

[Such, he says,* is the multitude of these pigeons in our forests, that I often ask myself if what I am about to relate is real. And yet I have seen it—have seen it distinctly, and in the company of persons who, like myself, have been struck with astonishment at the sight.

In the autumn of 1813, I started from the banks of the Ohio, in the direction of Louisville, crossing the wide open country which stretches for some miles beyond Hardensburg. I observed an immense swarm of pigeons, such as I had never before seen, flying from the north-east towards the south-west. Desiring to count the hosts which passed over my head in the space of an hour, I sprang from my horse, seated myself on an eminence, and began to make a pencil-stroke for each band or troop I saw. But I soon found that the thing was impracticable. The birds hurried one after another in innumerable multitudes. I rose, however, and counted the strokes in my note-book; one hundred and sixty-three, made in twenty-one minutes.

I resumed my journey, and the further I advanced the more pigeons I counted. The air was literally full of them. Though it was broad noon, the daylight was darkened by them, as if an eclipse had taken place; their ordure fell like flakes of melting snow; and the continual humming of their wings stunned me, and turned me giddy

* We do not give his exact words; condensing and altering as suits our purpose.



COUNTING THE INNUMERABLE

I halted at the junction of the river Salée with the Ohio;
and from the bank I watched, at my leisure, countless

legions of pigeons constantly sweeping by, with a front line which stretched far beyond the Ohio westward, and the forests of beech-trees which lie close by on the east. Not a single bird paused in his flight; for neither acorn nor nut could be found in the neighbourhood; and they flew so high that it was fruitless to attempt to hit them, even with the longest rifle. I cannot attempt to describe the admirable spectacle of their aerial evolutions. If, perchance, a falcon swooped down on the rearguard of one of their troops, all the pigeons simultaneously—like a torrent, and with the sound of thunder—rushed forward in compact masses, pressing one upon another towards the centre; while these solid masses hurried onwards in broken or gracefully undulated lines; descended to, and skimmed the ground with inconceivable rapidity; mounted perpendicularly, so as to form an immense column; and then, lost to view, wheeled about and about in endless lines, like the coils of a gigantic serpent.

Before sunset I reached Louisville, distant from Hardensburg about fifty-five miles. The pigeons were still flying past me in equally great numbers. And thus they continued for three days running. Everybody had rushed to arms. The banks of the Ohio were covered with men and young boys riddling incessantly the poor travellers, who flew lower as they crossed the river. Thousands—tens of thousands—were destroyed. For a week and more, the whole population fed upon nothing but pigeons, while the atmosphere continued profoundly impregnated with the peculiar odour of this species of bird.

So soon as they discover anywhere a sufficient abundance of suitable food, the pigeons prepare to descend, and wheel

about in wide circles, so as to examine for a considerable extent the country lying beneath them.

It is during these evolutions that their dense masses offer aspects of admirable beauty, and display, according as they change their direction, sometimes a canopy (so to speak) of the richest azure, sometimes a brilliant expanse of intensest purple. Then they drop to a lower level, sweep through the woods, and now losing themselves among the foliage, anon reappear to mount swiftly above the summits of the trees.

At length, behold them settled ! But soon, as if seized with a panic terror, they resume their flight, the beating of their wings being like the distant roar of thunder ; and they traverse the forest in every direction, as if to assure themselves it is free from danger. Hunger, however, soon brings them down to earth, where you may see them adroitly turning over the dry leaves which conceal the seeds and fruits fallen from the trees. Incessantly the rearward ranks mount, and sweep across the main body, to take up a position in advance ; and this manœuvre continues, with so rapid and continuous a motion, that the whole host seem to be simultaneously on the wing. The area of ground which they ravage is immense, and is so completely cleared that any gleaner coming after them would lose his pains. Sometimes they eat with such avidity, that in endeavouring to swallow a large nut or acorn they remain a considerable time panting and stretching their neck, as if on the very point of suffocation.

When they throng the woods in such innumerable hosts, the sportsmen kill them in prodigious quantities, without appearing to diminish their numbers.

Towards mid-day, when their repast is finished, they perch themselves upon the trees to repose, and to digest their food. On the ground they walk as easily as upon bough and branch; and they please themselves by expanding their beautiful tail, and moving their neck backward and forward in a very graceful manner. When sunset approaches, they regain their roosting-places *en masse*; hundreds of thousands of them, as I have been assured by persons who had exactly noted the moment of their arrival and departure.

And now, dear reader, let us follow them to the places they have selected for their nocturnal rendezvous. I know of one, which is specially worthy of your interest. It is situated on the banks of the Green River; and, as in all other cases, in that part of the forest where the thickets are highest and the under-wood freest. I have traversed it over an area of about fifty miles, and have found that it measures three miles in width.

The first time I visited it, the pigeons had been dwelling there for about a fortnight, and it was perhaps about two hours before sunset when I arrived. As yet very few birds were to be caught sight of; but a great number of persons, with horses, cars, guns, and munitions, were encamped on the threshold of the forest. Two farmers from the vicinity of Russellville, upwards of one hundred miles away, had brought a herd of nearly three hundred pigs, in order to fatten them on the flesh of the pigeons which were about to be massacred; here and there a settler was busy plucking and salting heaps of birds which had already fallen. Their excrement covered the ground several inches deep. I observed a number of trees, about

two feet in diameter, broken off close to the ground; and the branches of the largest and biggest had been shattered as if a hurricane had devastated the forest. In a word, there was every sign that the number of birds which frequented this part of the forest must be immense, beyond all conception.

As the moment approached for the arrival of the pigeons, their enemies were on the *qui-vive*, making ready to receive them. Some were furnished with iron pots full of sulphur; others, with torches of pine; many with poles; and the rest with guns. The sun sank below the horizon, and yet no sign of the winged army. Every one held himself ready, with his eye fixed on the clear blue firmament, glimpses of which were visible through the openings of the trees. Suddenly a general shout arose—"Here they are!" Though still at some distance, the noise of their wings reminded me of the rush of a strong breeze through the rigging of a ship whose sails are furled. When they passed above my head, I felt a current of air which surprised me. Already thousands had been felled to the ground by the men with their long poles, but they continued to arrive without cessation. The fires were kindled, and then the spectacle became fantastic, marvellous, and magnificently terrible. The birds precipitated themselves in headlong masses, and planted themselves where they could, one upon another, in huge piles; until the branches, yielding beneath their weight, cracked and fell, dragging with them to the ground and crushing beneath them the compact battalions which overloaded every part of the trees. It was a lamentable scene of tumult and confusion. In vain should I have attempted to speak, or even call, to the persons



A MASSACRE IN THE FOREST.

standing nearest me. It was with the utmost difficulty I could hear the reports of the musketry; and I could tell

that a hunter had fired only by seeing him reload his gun.

No one dared to venture into the midst of the field of carnage. The pigs had been shut up, but on the following day they were let loose to pick up the dead and wounded ; but still the pigeons came and came, and it was past midnight before I noticed any diminution in the number of arrivals. The orgie continued all night. I was curious to know to what distance it extended, and I sent out a man accustomed to traversing the forest. At the end of a couple of hours he returned, and told me that he distinctly heard the noise at a distance of three miles further. Finally, towards daybreak, the tumult somewhat subsided ; and long before any objects were distinguishable, the pigeons began to put themselves in motion in a direction quite opposite to the one they had come from on the preceding evening. At sunrise, all who were capable of flying had disappeared. And now came the turn of the wolves, whose howls fell loudly upon our ears ; of foxes, lynxes, couguars, bears, opossums, and polecats ; leaping, running, climbing, they pressed to the quarry : while eagles and falcons of different species precipitated themselves from their aerial heights with the view of supplanting them, or at least of securing their share of so rich a booty.

Then they, too, the authors of this bloody butchery, made their way into the midst of the dead, the dying, and the wounded. The pigeons were piled up in heaps ; each person took as many as he chose ; the swine were then let loose to satisfy their appetites with the remainder.

If one had not been familiar with these birds, one would

naturally have come to the conclusion that such terrible massacres must soon put an end to their species; but I have convinced myself, from long observation, that it is simply the gradual clearing of our forests which really menaces them; inasmuch as, in one year, they frequently quadruple their number, or at least never fail to double it. In 1805, I have seen schooners, with a complete cargo of pigeons caught near the upper waters of the Hudson river, discharge at the quays of New York, where the birds were sold at a halfpenny each. In Pennsylvania, I have known an individual capture nearly five hundred dozen in a hunting-net in a single day; he sometimes swept up twenty dozen and more with one blow of his net. In the month of March 1830 they were so abundant in the markets of New York, that you met with piles of them in all directions. At the salt-marshes of the United States, I have seen negroes fatigued with killing them for weeks, as they descended to drink the water issuing from the lifting-pumps. Again in 1826, in Louisiana, I have seen them assembled in legions as numerous as ever.

Does the reader wish to form an idea of the numbers of these pigeons, and of the quantity of food they can consume in a day?

For the base of our operation it will suffice to take a column of these birds, about a mile broad, which is beneath the reality, passing uninterruptedly for three hours, at the rate of a mile per minute. Thus we shall obtain a parallelogram, one hundred and twenty-four miles long, by one mile broad. Now allow a couple of pigeons to each square yard: the whole will give you one billion, one hundred and fifteen millions, one hundred and fifty-six thousand

pigeons in each flock. Now as each pigeon daily consumes a good half-pint, the nourishment necessary for the support of this immense multitude will be eight millions seven hundred and twelve thousand bushels *per diem*.]

Not only does man make use of pigeons as food and as objects to test his skill in gunnery, but he also contrives to associate them with his speculations and his sports. Until the post-office administration was brought into harmony with the wants of industry and commerce, and especially until the invention of the electric telegraph, pigeons were employed in France, Holland, Germany, Belgium, and to some extent in England, to convey rapidly to great distances the prices of stock on the public Exchange.

It is calculated that a good carrier-pigeon will accomplish from two to three miles per minute.

The notion of having recourse to pigeons as an aërial post was first carried out, it is said, at Anvers, by a merchant who had long lived in China.

The inhabitants of the Chinese Empire are animated, we know, by a positive mania for gaming, and seek with ingenious avidity every means of yielding to it. Especially they dote upon betting; and carry on, not, as in England and France, *horse-races*, but *pigeon-races*. For this purpose they breed, at great cost and with all kinds of minute cares, pigeons of a particular species, which are characterized by a robust frame and wings of uncommon vigour. These pigeons, in trellised baskets, are conveyed by boat—or rather by junk—to a certain distance, and are then let loose at an hour previously agreed upon.

Sometimes, before releasing them, their owners fasten to the tail a kind of tiny wooden whistle, consisting of eight to fifteen tubes of different dimensions, scientifically calculated and combined, so as to produce a kind of harmony when the wind forces its way into these tubes, owing to the impulse and rapidity with which the bird cleaves the air.

The betters wait for the pigeons at the entrance to the pigeonry, and recognize at a distance the particular bird belonging to any one of them by the music issuing from its whistle. They know beforehand who are the conquered or the conquerors.





CHAPTER IX.

THE BLACKBIRD.

"The ousel with its tawny bill."

THE BLACKBIRD JOHNNY—THE IDIOT AND THE BIRDS.



WHAT voice is it crying at my study-door, and calling me by my name,—“Harry! Harry!” Who is it striking so imperiously against the panels? My favourite blackbird, Johnny. He has grown tired of the kitchen, though he is very partial to my cook, who has brought him up from his featherless infancy, and fed him upon the dainty things she so skilfully prepares. And now, behold, he has installed himself on my desk, and scrutinizes

with large black eye all the objects surrounding me. Suddenly his gaze is caught by one of those wooden masks of New Caledonia, which the natives wear on their head in place of a helmet, to give them additional stature, and render them more terrible to an enemy: he breaks out into a rage, he attacks it and smites it with his bill, and is not appeased until I intervene. Nevertheless, at my voice he checks his onset, and perches himself on my shoulder.

Johnny is a native of La Vendée, and the descendant of a blackbird whose story is worth relating to you:—

Forty years ago, the district of Paris then designated the *New Athens*,—a district furrowed in every direction by the Rues de la Rochefoucauld, de la Bruyère, d'Aumale, Blanche, Pigalle, and de Douai,—was composed of immense gardens, at the bottom of which the Rue de la Rochefoucauld began its abrupt ascent, close to the mansions, recently erected, of Horace Vernet, the painter, and of the theatrical artists, Talma, Mademoiselle Mars, and Mademoiselle Duchesnois. Ascending the acclivity we speak of, you could just distinguish, in the midst of centenarian trees raising on all hands their crests luxuriant in verdure, two houses buried in leafy shadow: these belonged to the academician Arnault, the author of the tragedy *Marius at Minturnus*, and to the Marquis de Fortia d'Urban, honorary member of the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres, who devoted a portion of his immense fortune to re-editing and annotating rare books and unpublished historical documents. Near at hand were the park and conservatories of M. Boursault, the celebrated financier, and the house of Charles Deschamps, a young

painter, who, to use an expression then much in vogue, 'was just beginning to *cover his canvas with gold*.

Our artist's house occupied the most solitary and mysterious part of this curious district. It hid itself under immense chestnut-trees, mingled with elms and oaks, which formed the belt of a small park, traversed by a winding brook; the waters of the latter falling in an artificial cascade, and blending their sweet sounds with the murmurs of the trees and the songs of birds of every description.

The author of "Ruins," the senator Volney, had built this villa in 1804, and on one of its walls he had caused the following inscription to be set up:—

"Comme il ne croit point à la stabilité de la fortune, le sénateur Volney a fait construire cette petite maison pour y trouver un refuge."

That is: As he did not believe in the stability of fortune, the senator Volney has erected this little house to find therein a refuge.

The "Board of Charities" (*Administration des Hospices*), we may observe in passing, has recently (1867) pulled down the remains of Volney's villa, and raised on its site a free school for girls, superintended by the Sisters of Charity. By a singular chance, prayers will henceforth be said on a spot where, of old, such frequent proclamation was made of a shameless and unblushing atheism.

The front of the house, of an exaggerated simplicity, entirely windowless, and with only one door, added very much to the effect of the comfort and the elegance with which the visitor found himself surrounded immediately he crossed the threshold. If the artist had not interfered

with the cold, dry, rigid exterior built by Volney, he had taken his revenge in the interior, where you found all the luxuries and conveniences that a refined taste could suggest.

An immense studio opened on the garden, with a window thirteen feet square,—a perfect miracle at that epoch, and constructed expressly for Deschamps at the works of Saint-Gobain. This studio might very well have passed for a museum, it was so encumbered with weapons and costumes from every country in the world, objects of art, porcelains from China and Japan, specimens of Italian faïence ware, ancient statues, and original paintings by the great masters. Four doors, closed by Gobelin tapestry, led, the first, to a saloon worthy of the studio, and sumptuously furnished in the Louis Quatorze style; the second, to a dining-hall, characterized by the severe style of the thirteenth century; the third, to the artist's sleeping-chamber, which was decorated and furnished in the taste of the eighteenth century. The coquettish furniture had been made for Mademoiselle Duthé by the celebrated upholsterer Lelong, and had passed, after many vicissitudes, but without losing anything of its freshness, into the hands of Monsieur Deschamps.

The fourth door, finally, led to a small apartment, whose chasteness completely distinguished it from the remainder of the house. It consisted of a bed-chamber, a sitting-room, a dressing-room, and an oratory. This charming suite was entirely white: hangings and curtains of white damask silk enveloped the windows and covered the walls; carpets, made of genuine ermine-skin, were stretched over the floors; and, lastly, above the *prie-Dieu*

in the oratory was suspended one of Fra Angelico's pictures of "the Virgin,"—a picture of inestimable value.



MARIE.

This apartment was occupied by a young girl, whose delicate temperament was visible in her somewhat sickly beauty. She was one of those frail, languid darlings whose friends incessantly tremble lest they should be transformed into angels, and carried away from their embraces. And so, in the flush of his highest inspirations, you would see the artist suddenly desert his canvas and his brushes, and enter the young girl's apartment with a precipitation full of fear; if he found her asleep, he bent over her, listened anxiously to her respiration, and when satisfied that all was well, re-

turned softly to seat himself before his easel.

On the other hand, if he heard in the garden the bark of a little dog which always accompanied Marie, he hastened to take his stand before the window of the studio, forgetting everything while he followed with softened glance each graceful movement of the child, as she ran and played among the trees.

A woman, thirty years old, who wore the picturesque costume of the Vendean peasantry, never quitted the young girl for a moment : she shared the solicitude of Deschamps for the child nourished upon her milk, and by whose pillow she had passed so many nights of anguish, weeping and praying. Marie could not be an hour without Jeanne, and Jeanne felt as if she had ceased to live when accident separated her from her "daughter," as she not unjustly called her ; for she felt towards her the tenderness of the most impassioned mother.

Charles Deschamps, notwithstanding the devotion of the woman, whom he knew to be always at Marie's side, never issued from his house without a feeling of anxiety and dread.

In the evening, to refresh himself after twelve hours' work, he would sometimes indulge his taste for horsemanship, and mount Simoun, a splendid Arab steed which the king had presented to him ; but scarcely had he set forth before, on many occasions, he would abruptly turn his bridle, and return home at a gallop to embrace his daughter, the only object of affection remaining to him in this world.



THE VENDEAN NURSE.

The frail and tiny creature justified only too well the timid anxiety of her father and her nurse.

The day of her birth she had lost her mother, and her father his young wife, to whom he had been married barely a twelvemonth.

When he saw lying dead before him the beautiful woman whom he had loved ten years, and whom he had won from her family only after a prolonged and obstinate resistance, and after innumerable trials, the unfortunate man felt that his reason wandered. The idea of suicide fascinated him with its fatal vertigo, and already his hand had clasped a pistol, when a light murmur came from the cradle of the new-born. On hearing the voice of the child, who was so nearly being orphaned, he flung aside his weapon, threw himself on his wife's corpse, and exclaimed, "I swear to thee, I will live for *her* sake!"*

And, in fact, he thenceforth consecrated his life to this child, whom he named after her mother, and in whose features, voice, and very languor he saw that mother renewed. With too much reason, he trembled incessantly for the poor, frail little creature, whom illness for ever menaced. For *her* he bought the Villa Volney,—because surrounded by a beautiful garden, and situated at the foot of the hill of Montmartre, in a pure, fresh, and healthy air; for *her* he worked with feverish ardour; for *her* he lavished all the money he gained; and for *her* he led a solitary life, from which the most imperious exigencies of his position rarely succeeded in calling him

* We need hardly say that all this is very French, and very silly. Husbands are not justified in committing suicide, however deep their regret at losing a beloved wife.—*Translator*.

forth: he lived and he breathed only, only for his daughter.

Marie's precocious intelligence, and her love for her father and nurse, fully justified this uncontrolled tenderness, on which she leaned with a confidence wholly free from reserve. The three felt themselves the happiest creatures in the world, and no one could have seen without



A HAPPY GROUP.

emotion the young girl lying half asleep in Jeanne's arms, while her large blue eyes were fixed on her father with an ineffable expression of love. The father followed with his gaze her lightest movements, and could not satisfy himself with looking at her. Because, see you, as Saint Augustine says, man can cherish only two real affections—one, on high, for his God; the other, on earth, for his child.

Alas, the latter happiness is frail! And well did Deschamps know it to be so, since he unwillingly left his daughter's side for a moment, and enjoyed it with a kind of ecstasy which was full of apprehensions. A mysterious voice, one of those presentiments which speak to the soul, seemed to warn him that he must hasten to feed upon his happiness, for the fatal hour of separation was ominously approaching.

One evening, Marie had expressed to her father one of those fancies which sweep across a child's brain without leaving there any trace, and are forgotten almost before they are expressed. Deschamps resolved, however, to satisfy it; and in the beautiful autumn twilight, he ordered Jeanne to attire Marie in her gayest robe, and place her in an open carriage, to which the groom had just harnessed the splendid Simoun.

"You said to me the other day, darling, that you wished for a drive in the Bois de Boulogne; now, your wish shall be realized."

The child looked at her father tenderly.

"How good you are!" she said; "I had forgotten all about my fancy, and yet *you* remembered it, papa!"

"Come, come, darling," cried Deschamps, who felt the tears swelling in his eyes, for the mere sound of his daughter's voice stirred the depths of his heart; "come, seat yourself beside me, carefully wrap this pelisse around you, and let us start."

Jeanne herself placed the child in the carriage. Marie embraced her, saying—

"Never mind, little mother; don't look so sad; we shall soon return."

Jeanne wiped her wet eyes with her hand; the groom handed the reins to the artist, and Simoun darted off like lightning.

"Ah," exclaimed Marie, "how pleasant it is to sweep so rapidly through the city! What a long avenue! Are not these the Champs Elysees of which you spoke to me the other day? Is not the wood towards which Simoun is carrying us the Bois de Boulogne? I am very happy at home, papa; but I am still more happy here! With you by my side, in these new scenes I feel as if I were dreaming!"

The happy father, sharing to the full in the joyousness of his daughter, turned round to look at her more closely; in doing so, he let the reins slip out of his hands. He was leaning forward to recover them, when a carriage suddenly came round a bend of the road, and, in passing, came in contact with Simoun. The Arab took fright, darted off at a gallop, astonished and infuriated by the reins which dragged at his heels, flapped against his legs, and rubbed his flanks. Suddenly the carriage dashed violently against the trunk of a tree, and was shattered in pieces; Marie and her father, who held her clasped against his bosom, being thrown to some distance.

The bystanders hastened to their succour.

"Alas!" exclaimed one who raised them up—"alas! the father is dead, and the child has received a wound in the head from which, I am afraid, she will never recover."

I know no town or city where people more rapidly form

passionate friendships, or more quickly forget them, than Paris. At first, the tragic and unexpected death of Charles Deschamps produced an immense sensation, and I may venture so far as to say that it was a cause of general regret for fully a week! Everybody dwelt upon the premature loss which the Arts had sustained; if you accosted an acquaintance, it was to ask for, or listen to, additional details respecting the melancholy event; and finally, never were funeral obsequies celebrated with more pomp, or in the presence of a larger and more deeply affected multitude.

But in less than a year people passed by the villa of Charles Deschamps without bestowing a thought on the artist who had once inhabited it. A large red bill, conspicuous at every point of vantage, announced the approaching sale of a small landed estate, consisting of a mansion with an artist's studio attached, surrounded by a well-wooded park of upwards of an acre: price £1200.

The day after the sale took place, Marie was seated with her nurse under an old oak, which a large daub of red paint on its trunk too plainly indicated was soon to be felled by the new proprietor.

You would have felt much difficulty in recognizing in the child dressed all in black the charming little Marie, whom her father had formerly surrounded with an atmosphere of such anxious love. While Jeanne was assiduously engaged in knitting some coarse woollen stockings, from which she lifted her eyes occasionally to fix them upon Marie, the latter, plunged into a kind of stupor, scarcely opened her eyelids, except when some rude rough porter

passed by, engaged in removing the few articles of furniture still left at the villa to a van which was in waiting at the garden-gate.

A broad band covered the forehead of the sickly, attenuated child, whose features, alas! no longer beamed with their former intelligence. At intervals, she raised her heavy head, uttered some inarticulate sounds, and then sank back again upon the grass to fall into an idiotic languor.

Just at this moment entered, accompanied by an old man, Doctor Lisfranc, the only one of the friends of the artist Deschamps who had not forgotten the road to his house. At the sound of the voice of him who for a year had bestowed on her the most gentle attentions, a vague smile opened the languid lips of Marie, and she appeared to recognize the physician.

The latter wiped away a tear, and turning towards the person who accompanied him, said :—

“Behold, sir, all that remains of the happiness and glory which, last year, brightened this mansion: an idiot orphan! I have cured her of the wound which had fractured the skull; have preserved her life, but could not preserve her reason.

“Perhaps, after all, it is better that she should witness without comprehending the ruin and desolation which surround her. Poor Deschamps! He believed so earnestly in the fortune which promised him a future never, alas! to be realized....The sum fetched by his villa and its furniture and pictures will hardly suffice, I am told, to pay his debts.”

The old man replied :—



MARIE AND HER NURSE.

“Yes, doctor, all this is very melancholy! All the more melancholy since I could not obtain for the poor

orphan a larger pension than £25 ; the State has so many unfortunate artists to relieve, that it is reduced to a grievous parsimony."

"Jeanne, my faithful Jeanne," said Dr. Lisfranc abruptly, "you see that for Marie there is no other consolation in the world than yourself ; unless, indeed, we get her admission into some hospital or asylum, where she will surely die. On the other hand, a free life in the open air will probably one day restore her to reason. Will you, as you have hitherto done, continue to devote yourself to her ? Will you become, once for all, her mother ?"

"I will do for my child what I have done for her from her birth."

"Then both of you, this very day, must quit this house, which to-morrow the builders will begin to demolish. Return to your native village of Maine-et-Loire, and endeavour to purchase a small farm in Marie's name. We shall find sufficient,—will we not?" he added, turning towards his companion,—“we will find sufficient in our purse, and in our friends' purses, to make up the two thousand or three thousand francs you may require?"

"Assuredly, doctor, and you may rely upon me."

"There, my good Jeanne, your child and yourself can live tolerably well on the pension given by the king, and the produce of your little farm. I am a son of a peasant, and I know how cheaply one can live in a retired village. Give our poor Marie absolute liberty, and keep her as much as you can in the woods and fields. You don't write a bad letter, though your handwriting is rather large ; a good thing, in fact, for as I am short-sighted, I can read it all the better ; you can let me have news of Marie,

therefore, as often as you think it necessary. Meanwhile, here is some money to defray the expenses of your journey. *Au revoir*, and may God bless your devotion ! ”

He kissed Jeanne on both cheeks, raised Marie from the ground, took her in his arms, contemplated her for some moments with emotion, and kissed her on the forehead.

“ Papa ! papa ! ” murmured the child.

Lisfranc hastened to seat her on Jeanne’s knees, and precipitately took his leave.

“ Ah, my friend,” said he to his companion, as they took their seats in his carriage, “ how many sad moments one must pass in this life ! ”

As soon as evening came, Jeanne, after having packed up her clothes and Marie’s in a large portmanteau, took the child by the hand, and proceeded to the office of the diligences which then ran between Paris and Angers. After seeing her luggage safely stowed away, she took possession of a couple of places, and seated by her side the idiot, who submitted with the passive indifference which characterized her.

The journey was long and fatiguing, yet the poor creature made no complaint. Nearly always asleep, she leaned closely upon her nurse ; but at the different stages, allowed herself to be carried into the inn to get some refreshment, and to be brought back to the diligence, with the same absence of all anxiety. Only she would not suffer Jeanne to leave her, even for a few seconds ; if she did, Marie uttered a succession of piteous wails, and struck her head despairingly against the sides of the coach.

At length, after two days’ travelling, Jeanne and her

adopted daughter arrived at Angers, setting forth again almost immediately for a small hamlet near Saint-Florent-le-Vieil.

Saint-Florent-le-Vieil, which lies about thirty-five miles from Angers, is situated on the right bank of the Loire, on an immense scarped cliff of the strangest and most picturesque aspect. Jeanne purchased in its environs a small isolated cottage, which overlooked the majestic course of the river, the verdant isles dividing it into many channels, and the vast pastures extending far beyond the reach of sight. As soon as she obtained possession of the good-sized garden which surrounded her new dwelling-place, she undertook as enthusiastically the work of cultivation as if she had not lived twelve years at Paris, in the enjoyment of every luxury and abundance of leisure. From daybreak she was at work, spade and rake in hand; she dug, and she cleared, and she sowed, and she planted, and she hoed, and gathered,—utterly indifferent to fatigue,—and yet never neglecting her knitting-needles, which she resumed indoors when evening came on.

Marie, at first, lying lazily upon the grass, would regard her constant industry with calm indifference; but, gradually, the influence of a revivifying air, and the desire of imitation, as innate in idiots as in children, acted upon her, and led her to her nurse's side, at first to see what she was doing, and afterwards, to follow her example. Soon there was not to be found, in all Saint-Florent-le-Vieil and its environs, a female labourer equal to the child in strength and activity. Browned by the sun, and rendered robust by exercise, Marie was always indefatigable; and her smile



JEANNE AT WORK.

assumed a vague expression of intelligence, when Jeanne patted her affectionately on the shoulder, saying,—

“Well done, cleverly done, my child!”

Imperceptibly, an unconquerable longing for exertion took the place of that sickly lethargy which had dominated over the child since the fatal accident. She could no longer be kept indoors, but escaped incessantly to traverse the meadows and wander through the woods. Without any consciousness of danger, she clambered up the steepest hills, or rolled down the greatest declivities, and undertook the most adventurous excursions. Eventually she even clomb the trees, and leaped from branch to branch with the address and agility of a squirrel.

Jeanne at first felt deeply this constant desertion of Marie's, but in time she resigned herself, and allowed her

to have her own way. She knew, moreover, that she was protected by the superstitious respect in which the idiot and the imbecile are held in that part of France.

A year passed by, and, one evening, the nurse saw Marie returning home, according to custom, after a day's wandering. Though she was not sixteen years old, she was so tall and robust as to seem fully seventeen or eighteen. Her loins girdled with a short petticoat of red wool, her bosom confined within a brown-coloured jacket, her feet bare, her long fair tresses scattered over her shoulders, she was the very personification of health and strength. As soon as she caught sight of her nurse, she ran towards her, uttered a certain guttural inflexion which she used to express her satisfaction, and cautiously lifting up a corner of her stuff apron—it was reduced almost to tatters—she revealed an object which had been carefully wrapped up within it.

It was a nest of blackbirds, containing four little fledglings

“What are you going to do with these poor birds?” asked Jeanne. “Give them something to eat.—Alas, poor child! I am talking as if she understood me!”

To her nurse's great surprise, Marie showed some berries placed in a knotted corner of her apron, and offered them to the little birds, which, with a cluck, immediately opened wide their tiny beaks, and swallowed the provender presented to them by the child.

As soon as they were satisfied, the child, who had been kneeling before the nest, arose, went into the garden and picked some osier-branches growing near its little brooklet, formed them into a kind of basket open at the top, as she had frequently seen her adopted mother do, deposited



THE NEST OF BLACKBIRDS.

therein the birds, and curving her two hands around her mouth, began to imitate the cry of the little ones when asking for food.

Afterwards she dragged Jeanne into a corner of the garden, behind a bush, and putting her finger to her lips, indicated she was to remain silent.

Jeanne was surprised, almost terrified, and, certainly, much affected at seeing, for the first time since she had left Paris, a gleam of intelligence shining upon her features. The dull glazed eye of the child was now turned towards heaven with an expression of *waiting*; her impatience upheaved her bosom, and her hand clasped fast the hand of her adopted mother, who felt it tremble in her own.

Suddenly the grasp was tightened; a hoarse inarticulate sound escaped from the young girl's lips, and she quickly raised her head towards the sky.

Two black specks appeared in the air, above the farm-house.



"HUSH!"

At first scarcely visible, they gradually drew nearer and larger, until, becoming plainly defined, Marie and Jeanne could distinguish a couple of blackbirds. After much hesitation, and with a thousand timid precautions, the birds eventually skimmed with their wings the basket containing the nest and their young ones, who, perceiving them, were all astir, and broke out into quick shrill cries.

At length, one of the blackbirds—the female, easily recognized by her smaller stature and more slender figure—grew bolder, and after clinging awhile to the edge of the basket, plunged into the nest. The little ones hastily took shelter under her wings, where you might hear their cries gradually fading away, until silence prevailed.

Meantime, the male maintained his place on a neighbouring branch: you could see him on the watch, turning to the right, then to the left, in front, behind, on all sides, his black head and intelligent eyes. Twice or thrice, the fall of a branch or leaf, or a distant sound, induced him to give a signal of alarm. Then the female sprang from the nest, flew away with her companion, or rather, concealed herself in the leafiest part of a tree. Gradually the silence reassured her, and when fully convinced of the absence of all danger, she resumed her place in the middle of her brood.

Marie was never weary of contemplating this scene: she compelled Jeanne to remain there, hidden and motionless, like herself, for two long hours, until the shadows of night gathered all around. When she could no longer see the birds, she sighed, caught the hand of her nurse, and with a thousand precautions, and making all kinds of windings, she brought her back to the farm-house, so that

the birds might not perceive their departure or take flight. On re-entering the house, she flung herself into Jeanne's arms, and murmured the word "Mamma!"

Jeanne lovingly returned the caresses of the poor child, who, for the first time, had addressed her after so long a silence, and then fell on her knees before a crucifix suspended by the bedside.

When she had finished her prayers,—mingled as they were with tears of gratitude and hope,—she saw that Marie



MARIE LEARNS TO PRAY.

had knelt behind her, and clasped her hands together in imitation of her nurse.

On the following morning, at daybreak, and before even Jeanne was awake, the child stole furtively from her bed, gained the neighbouring wood, and made an abundant collection of berries and insects.

Returning to the garden, she crouched among the tall bushes, and slowly crept towards the nest.

She used so many and such ingenious precautions that the blackbirds saw nothing, heard nothing, and made no movement of inquietude.

She then deposited near at hand the supplies of food she had collected, and waited, with her eyes fixed upon the basket. The sun was rising, and flung its first rays on the garden still enveloped in a mist, which, however, was speedily dissipated beneath the influence of the warm, vivifying heat of the orb of day.

The male, the first to awake, lifted up his head, which he had kept hidden under his wing, seemed to inhale the genial emanations diffused around him, shook his feathers, and straightway, without hesitation, sprang upon the berries and insects. On seeing Marie, he resumed his flight with terror, and rose to a great elevation in the air, uttering a cry of distress. At this cry, the female took flight in return, and went to join the male. Both, with rapid wings, wheeled around and around for some minutes, now lost to sight, now skimming the very surface of the ground. At last, reassured by Marie's motionlessness, whose heart, however, was throbbing very fast, they ventured to plant themselves, at some short distance from her, upon the ground, and to strike with smart blows of the beak one or two insects which had been endeavouring to effect their escape, and had already crawled some distance from the place where they had been deposited. They carried this booty to the fledglings, who began their breakfast with cries of joy.

Emboldened by their first success, the birds returned to the charge; this time, they attacked the principal heap, and, growing constantly more and more encouraged, ended

by abandoning themselves to its pillage, without taking any precautions, and in complete security. Upon the sand remained just one or two tiny clusters of seed: Marie took advantage of a moment when the blackbirds were occupied in the basket feeding their brood, to take up rapidly these few grains, which she spread out on her open palm.

The birds, on their return, surprised at not finding the seed where they had left it, fled away in a panic of terror, and exercised a thousand precautions in coming back a second time.

Eventually, the hen bird placed herself in front of the girl's hand as far off as she could manage, yet calculating all the time the distance from which she could reach it with the tip of her bill.

Then, with an abrupt movement, she stretched forth her neck, seized a berry, took flight, and contemplated from a neighbouring bush whatever events might happen.

Nothing stirred.

She recommenced her manoeuvres, and did not cease until she had carried off the last atom of the booty in Marie's hand.

Marie then crept away for about thirty yards, gently raised herself, returned to the little farm-house, embraced her mother anew; pointed her forefinger towards the nest, struck her hands against one another with a gesture of joy, and moving her lips with an effort, and stretching the swollen chords of her throat, after two or three painful attempts, she contrived to articulate the word *bird*. Inexpressibly delighted by her success, she clapped her hands anew, leaped joyously, and repeated at least a score of times: "*Bird ! bird ! bird !*"

I need hardly tell you that for a whole day the black-birds and their young were left undisturbed.

Jeanne took care to carry on her agricultural pursuits in a remote part of the garden, and Marie went away into the wood ; returning, towards evening, with a basket full of all kinds of food for her little feathered pensioners.

A few days afterwards, the birds had not only made themselves entirely comfortable in the basket, but no longer took to flight when Jeanne, or, especially, Marie, passed in their vicinity. Assured that they intended them no harm, they manifested the most absolute confidence, as, under similar circumstances, is the case with all animals, even the most timid.

Whatever time Marie did not occupy in the woods, collecting the wherewithal for her favourites' nourishment, she spent, seated near the basket, in watching the little family so happily accommodated.

And it was not long before the birds, on her making her appearance, displayed the liveliest joy, and would unceremoniously pilfer from her hands the food she served out too slowly for their taste. Soon they did not hesitate even to climb and perch upon her shoulders, to pull at her tresses, and to allow her to caress them. Sometimes they entrusted to her the guardianship of their nest, and flew far away in quest of food ; or if they remained at home, and Marie was later than usual in attending to them, they flew to meet her, addressed her with an affectionate welcome as soon as she came in sight, and returned to the farm-house, sometimes leaping from branch to branch,

sometimes perched on her back or arms, sometimes hopping along the road by her side.

The little ones, who grew, so to speak, even while you looked at them, so well were they nourished, shared their parents' affection for the young girl. They fed also as willingly from her hand as from the maternal bill, climbed up their osier bars to Marie's knee, and followed her everywhere about the house and garden, to the great delight of the child and Jeanne's indescribable satisfaction; for then the young girl, happy, animated, gay, repeated with intonations—hoarse still, undoubtedly, but exceedingly sweet to the ears of her devoted foster-mother—"Mamma! bird! mamma! bird!"

Two months later, and the promenades of the winged family and their friend were no longer confined to the garden and the farm; daily they took their rambles through the woods, sometimes even for whole days. The birds did not hesitate to make long sweeping flights, to perch upon the trees, to rummage in the furrowed ground, and to abandon themselves to every kind of caprice; but whenever Marie uttered a kind of sharp whistle, audible at a great distance, you might see the blackbirds and their five little ones, which had grown almost as big as their parents, hastening with rapid wings to rejoin her, and disputing among themselves for the grasshopper or the juicy berry she had gathered for them. In the evening, the child returned home with her full escort, most of the time flying and whirling above her head, and uttering little cries, while Marie clapped her hands, and as soon as she caught sight of Jeanne, exclaimed as loudly as she could, "Mamma! bird!"

**MARIE AND HER PETS.**

The inhabitants of Saint-Florent-le-Vieil came at last to notice the strange friendship existing between Jeanne's

adopted daughter and the swarm of blackbirds. At an epoch when superstitious notions still held possession of the minds of the common people—even to-day their traces are visible in old Vendée—we need not wonder that some ignorant and prejudiced person let drop the fatal word “sorcery” to explain a phenomenon hitherto without example in that country. The word, as is too often the case with absurdities, was eagerly caught up, and was speedily heard on every tongue. Children, hearing the epithet of “witch” incessantly applied to Marie, whose feebleness and imbecility they had hitherto respected, returned to the evil instincts of their pitiless age, and gradually began to hold the idiot in abhorrence. They pointed at her from a distance, repeating the hateful term which their parents continued to bestow upon the unfortunate creature, who was always wandering about the hills and valleys, with dishevelled hair and disordered garments, and who could pronounce but two words only of the language of Christians.

We pass very quickly from passive dislike to active hostility, especially at the age of seven or eight, and when we have to deal with a creature deprived of reason and utterly defenceless. The little boys, and even the little girls, never failed to hoot at Marie if they met her alone in any solitary road.

Marie, accustomed to the kindness which every one had hitherto shown her, looked at the children without understanding the nature of their malevolent jesting, laughed with her fatuous laughter at those who shouted “Witch! witch!” and blended her voice with theirs, crying, “Mamma! bird! mamma! bird!”

One day it happened that one of the worst members of the troop, lame and stunted and deformed, and the ordinary butt of his comrades, found himself face to face with Marie at a spur of the cliff which overhangs the Loire. The poor fellow, in the habit of succumbing to the superior strength of others, seized this occasion to enjoy the delight of feeling the strongest and most malicious.

First, he exhausted against the idiot his complete stock of insults, which she received, according to her manner, with laughter, and with cries, as loud as his own, of "Mamma! bird!" Emboldened by this mode of procedure, he seized Marie's dress, snatching away a piece of it. The imbecile laughed as heartily as he himself did on seeing the bit of cloth remaining in the hands of the surly coward, who, however, indignant at her laughter, dealt her a blow with his fist. The poor creature not only shrieked with the pain it inflicted, but fell down on the brink of the cliff, in imminent danger of gliding along its rapid declivity into the waters of the Loire.

He was on the point of repeating it, when he suddenly felt himself attacked in the face by a troop of invisible assailants, who seemed to fall from the sky upon his head, scratched his face with their sharp beaks, and flew at his eyes with so much fury that his countenance was speedily covered with blood, and he could scarcely see. In a frenzy of terror, he took to his heels; but his enemies pursued him obstinately, and did not leave him until he had run a considerable distance, and was in a wretched condition.

However far Marie's excursions led her, she always returned to her house before nightfall, with that mechanical



MARIE'S DEFENDERS.

punctuality noticeable in the actions of all beings deprived of reason. Her foster-mother, therefore, felt no anxiety about her absence until twilight began to tint with violet-purple the clouds of sunset. "Marie," she said to herself, "has found in the woods some juniper-berries and mulberries, and is sharing them with her birds: as she does

not feel hungry, she has climbed, I daresay, into the trees, where she and the blackbirds will sing from bough to bough. For she imitates whatever *they* do; and I really think she flies almost as well as they,—to say nothing of the fact that her song might well be mistaken for theirs. The other evening I heard her warbling after their fashion; one might almost say she understands their language.”

While talking thus, and endeavouring to keep down the anxiety which she was beginning to feel, Jeanne walked up and down the garden. She gazed steadily as far as she could see, and listened with a watchful ear.

“ Ah,” she suddenly exclaimed, “ Marie is returning! I hear her blackbirds uttering their cries, and whirling to and fro above the farm-house. But why, instead of coming down and nestling themselves in their basket, as they do every evening, why is it that they whirl around and around, crying incessantly? Why do they almost touch my face with their wings, and fly off in the direction of the cliff, to return to me, and direct their flight again towards the Loire? Oh, mercy! has any accident happened to Marie, and do they wish to warn me of it?”

Immediately, without further reflection, and without even stopping to put on her *sabots*, she ran barefooted towards the cliff, preceded by the blackbirds. Suddenly they swooped down on the abrupt declivity, where Jeanne, who had closely watched their every movement, discovered Marie bleeding, and in a swoon.

The astonished nurse took the poor child upon her knees, and sought to revive her by breathing on her ice-cold face, and rubbing her rigid hands with her large woollen skirt. By dint of the most anxious efforts, she



MARIE WOUNDED.

enjoyed the satisfaction of seeing the wounded one languidly reopen her eyes and look about her vaguely.

"May God be praised!" cried Jeanne; "all is not lost; her fall has not killed her."

Speaking thus to herself, the stalwart woman took Marie in her arms, as, in happier days, she had been wont to do in Paris, and carrying her home, deposited her in her bed.

While she was engaged in removing her clothes, and effecting her complete resuscitation, the seven blackbirds remained perched on the window-sill, and seemed, with their intelligent eyes, to follow the slightest movements of Jeanne.

The latter washed Marie's wound with warm water, the child still preserving an absolute impassibility. Though she poured into her ears the most loving of speeches, and embraced her every moment, she could not arouse her from the torpor.

Gradually, to this too alarming condition of weakness succeeded a still more alarming agitation. Marie's eyes grew inflamed; she trembled violently; she uttered inarticulate cries, and a convulsive shudder shook all her body with the symptoms of a burning fever. Sometimes she started up suddenly on her couch; at other times, she was fain to throw herself headlong from it; and she repulsed Jeanne violently, shrieking the only two words her lips were able to pronounce—"Mamma! bird!"

The poor woman knew not what to do. It was now night, and the sole physician in that part of the country lived nearly three miles distant. How could she go for him? To leave Marie, while in such a delirious condition, alone for an hour, was impossible. She could not summon any neighbour to her help, for there was none at hand. While in her agony she prayed and wept, she suddenly heard the sound of a distant carriage. Immediately she ran to the garden-gate, and placing her hands to her mouth, she cried aloud, with all her strength,—

"Help! help!" After which she listened.

The carriage continued on its way.

The poor woman renewed her shouts. This time the noise of the wheels distinctly ceased, and she heard, amid the absolute silence which prevails at night in solitary places, the sound of footsteps more and more defined, and evidently in the direction of the farm. She ran to meet the stranger Providence had sent so miraculously to her assistance, seized him by the arm, and dragged him into Marie's chamber, saying,—

"Come, come, in Heaven's name! my child is dying!"

And dying, in very truth, she appeared to be, as she lay on the floor, a prey to the most violent convulsions.

The stranger was a man of about thirty years of age; his handsome but naturally serious countenance assumed an expression of sympathy and sorrow on seeing the sufferings of the invalid. Raising her gently in his arms, he replaced her in her bed, adjusted her coverlets with as much skill and anxiety as if he had been a woman or a father, placed his fingers on her wrist and attentively felt her pulse. After which he ascertained from Jeanne the circumstances under which she had found her foster-daughter, examined the wound, and dressed it with some instruments which he took from a surgical case.

"This child," he said, "is in a serious state. I must spend the night beside her. Be good enough to tell my footman, who is waiting for me on the road; he will let the coachman drive back to Saint-Florent-le-Vieil, and bring me my portmanteau."

Jeanne hastened to obey the order, and, before long, returned with the servant.

The stranger, after having given some instructions to the latter, drew from the portmanteau a little casket full of drugs. He then prepared a mixture, a spoonful of which he administered to the invalid every quarter of an hour, until the fever was subdued, and eventually she fell into a profound slumber.

"An excellent symptom," he observed, with a smile, turning towards Jeanne; "I hope to-morrow morning she will wake up free from fever, and in her sound mind."

"Alas!" cried Jeanne, "she will not awake in a sound

mind! She has been an idiot for the last five years. It is, doubtless, through God's mercy that this has been the case; the loss of reason is a benefit for the orphan!"

She then related to the physician, for such he was, the name of Marie's father, and his terrible death.

"I was already acquainted," he replied, "with the melancholy story. My mother, who is connected by close ties of kinship with Mademoiselle Deschamp's mother, was left in North America, some fifteen years ago, to struggle with me against an evil fortune, which, praise to God! she eventually succeeded in overcoming. On our return to France, she learned from our friend, Doctor Lisfranc, the death of her sister and her sister's husband, and Marie's terrible accident. She commissioned me to visit this spot, and to satisfy myself by personal examination whether it was possible for medical science to restore the reason of which Marie was so suddenly deprived. I came here to discharge this duty, when suddenly accident, or rather Providence, has brought me unexpectedly to her side. I am not without hope that I may cure my cousin of her wound, and, perhaps, with God's blessing, and by anxious care, restore to the enjoyment of reason the poor girl whom you have so devotedly cherished. It is necessary, therefore, I should install myself in this house, in order to conduct, if I can, this twofold process of healing; see, dear Jeanne, if you can get me a room ready. The physician who recently occupied in Canada a garret inside an hospital can readily make himself comfortable under any circumstances, and all the more easily in a house so exquisitely clean and neat as yours. In the morning, therefore, be good enough to go into the town

and purchase whatever may be necessary for my accommodation. Jacques, my old valet, shall guide you in your purchases; he is thoroughly acquainted with my wants and habits. As for money, don't trouble yourself about *that*; my mother is wealthy, and lavishes but too much money on her only child, whom she unwisely adores."

When Jeanne returned from the town, accompanied by Jacques, and followed by a cart loaded with furniture, she found Marie seated on her couch, and was greeted with the usual words, "Mamma! bird!"

At the same time a succession of smart raps was audible on the window-panes. Jeanne threw open the casement, and straightway the seven blackbirds, which hitherto had prudently kept their distance on a tree whence they could descry Marie's bed, darted into the chamber, flew for a few moments, suspiciously, around the young physician, and, growing reassured, swooped down on the couch of their invalid friend, lavishing upon her the most affectionate caresses.

As Louis de Bocourt, for such was the young man's name, looked on with surprise at so curious a spectacle,—

"Sir," said the nurse, "these birds, next to myself, are her best friends; she knows and loves no others in the whole world."

Afterwards she told him how the friendship had been contracted; how the blackbirds had warned her, the preceding evening, of Marie's danger; and how they had conducted her to the cliff, where she lay wounded.

Louis listened in silence to her story.

In this, perhaps, he was saying to himself, lies my poor patient's chance of recovery.

And he sat for a long time thinking.

A few days later, the invalid, whose condition had gradually improved, and whose fever had completely given way to the remedies employed by her new friend, was pronounced convalescent, and allowed to leave her chamber. Supported by the arms of Jeanne and Louis, she contrived to gain the beloved garden, where, under a leafy tree, she was installed in a comfortable *fauteuil*, purchased from the upholsterer of Florent-le-Vieil.

While she was delightedly inhaling the fresh, free air, so bland and genial to a convalescent, after a week's seclusion in a close chamber, the blackbirds hovered merrily around her, piping brief strains of joy.

No sooner did she hear them, than she arose, extended her arms towards them, and responded to their cries with cries like their own, and so faithfully imitated that the most attentive ear could not have distinguished them from the warbling of the birds.

The physician clasped his head between his two hands, and in this attitude meditated for some time.

"Yes," he said at last; "yes, these are the auxiliaries I must employ in attempting the cure of poor Marie."

From this moment he neglected nothing which could ingratiate him with the blackbirds; and it is but fair to say he was not long in effecting his object. As he never quitted Marie for a moment, but accompanied her in the walks, which she speedily resumed, among the woods and



MARIE GREETED HER OLD FRIENDS.

fields; as he always kept himself well supplied with insects and juniper-berries, the blackbirds soon showed towards him almost as great a familiarity as that which they kept up with Marie. .

Once this result was obtained, M. de Bocourt profited by it to hum aloud, during their excursions, short airs and

even easy words, which the blackbirds, gifted, as we know, with a marvellous imitative instinct, quickly learned to repeat with fidelity. Thus they came to possess a sufficiently varied repertory, in which Marie followed them step by step. It was truly a strange thing to see this young man continually attended by a maiden fantastically attired, and by a cluster of birds which whirled around them, uttering, with their clear and strident voice, a number of words which seemed to drop from the clouds, and which the child repeated like an echo.

Autumn and winter passed away without producing in Marie's mental condition any change appreciable as a perceptible development of intelligence. She had, it is true, learned as many words as the blackbirds knew; but she spoke them as the birds did, with the same whistling intonation, not comprehending their signification, and unable to apply them appropriately. The facility with which she remembered them was the result of an imitative instinct, nothing more. Nor was M. de Bocourt more successful when he sought to limit this tall and beautiful creature's love of wandering. It was now becoming dangerous for her to take long walks alone in the meadows and the woods. Nothing could keep her at home; neither frost nor snow, nor the tempests which shook the crests of the leafless trees, nor the physician's refusal to accompany her. She glided away stealthily, summoned her blackbirds with a peculiar muffled call, and hurried with them into some hiding-place. Louis, therefore, was compelled either to leave her without protection, or to follow her whether he would or no. Nothing, however, could

discourage or weaken his devotedness; he felt himself sustained by the importance of his mission, and by the hope that an unforeseen incident might suddenly arouse the slumbering intelligence of Marie, or, at all events, indicate some mode of restoring her to reason.

Spring at length arrived, and with it came balmy mornings and sprouting leaves.

To Marie's surprise and discontent, the five young black-birds began thenceforth to detach themselves from their parents: each flew away every morning after his own fashion, and did not return home until evening. On the other hand, the father and mother were sedentary. The male perched himself on the branch of an elm, where he sang his most brilliant airs, and repeated all the words which Louis had taught him. While he indulged in this coquettish display, shaking his pretty head, expanding and smoothing his feathers, the busy female went to and fro, picking up small bits of twig and bough, to construct among the branches of a tree a nest which, undoubtedly, appeared to her better placed under the foliage than in the basket provided for her the year before. It was pleasant to see her—ready, and alert, and adroit—sometimes seizing with her yellow bill a blade of moss, sometimes a long straw, sometimes a tiny supple branch, and, afterwards, entwining and interweaving them with all the skill of the most expert weaver. Encouraged by the songs and chatter of her mate, who never was silent, except when watching the turf, or the garden-border, to seize an insect which he immediately carried to his companion, in less than a day she finished building her graceful little edifice, composed of roots and of all kinds of vegetable refuse, and consoli-

dated by a stout layer of clay. On the morrow, at dawn, she completed her work, and having lined the interior with all the feathers she could collect, she flew far away with her companion.

Marie, seated near the new nest, had followed up every detail of its construction with restless and almost feverish attention. When she saw the two blackbirds take to flight, she wished to follow the direction they had taken, and gain with them the shelter of the woods; but the birds, so soon as they descried her, rose to an almost invisible elevation in the air, and directed their course to another quarter, as if seeking to avoid her.

Marie, disappointed, remained alone with Louis, whom she regarded with a sorrowful air.

The young man took her by the hand, and endeavoured to lead her away; but she repulsed him, and returning to the nest, knelt down before it gloomy and silent. She waited in vain for the blackbirds, who did not reappear for some days.

M. de Bocourt profited by the prolonged absence of the birds to ameliorate the wild, strange appearance of the poor child, despairing for want of her favourite companions. Gradually he persuaded her to listen to and repeat some new words which he attempted to teach her. One day she even submitted so far as to allow Jeanne to comb and bind up her long, flowing hair, which hitherto she had persisted in wearing dishevelled and disordered on her shoulders. The nurse profited by this sudden fit of obedience to substitute for Marie's faded garments a new and fresh costume; and by Louis' orders, she presented a looking-glass to the young girl. The latter stood at first

astonished at the image which she saw therein. She passed her fingers over the mirror, looked behind it, and appeared preoccupied and disturbed. M. de Bocourt leaned over her shoulder, and the mirror revealed his features side by side with those of Marie: the child's sur-



"SEEING OURSELVES AS OTHERS SEE US."

prise increased. He profited by the new emotion which she manifested to show her—reflecting in the glass the farm, the garden, and the woods—the countryside she knew so well. Dazzled, she passed her hands over her eyes, then suddenly seizing hold of the mirror, which

she had just rejected, she looked into it with much complacency, and would hardly allow it to be taken from her.

Thenceforth, every time her tresses fell into disorder, every time she tore her clothes, her cousin showed her in the glass the unpleasing appearance induced by her return to wild and uncouth habits. Immediately she would hasten to tie up her hair, and to arrange with some degree of taste the skirt of red wool, whose rents she allowed Jeanne to patch as best she could.

Every morning, at daybreak, she repaired to the nest constructed with so much skill, care, and labour, and which, nevertheless, remained abandoned.

One day she ran, joyous and panting, towards her nurse and Louis, who feigned to be asleep, for they well understood the cause of her gleeful emotion, and the doctor was fain to take advantage of it to carry a step further the progressive intelligence of his patient. She pulled them, she shook them; they remained motionless and silent. After awhile they opened their eyes; she made them a sign to follow her, but they did not respond to her invitation. She stamped her foot; impatience reddened her sunburned face. Finally, she passed her hands over her forehead as if to develop an idea; knelt before M. de Bocourt; fixed upon him her large blue eyes, and, catching hold of him again, she said,—

“Come!”

It was the first time she had appeared to comprehend the meaning of any of the words she had learned in company with her birds.

Astonished, but delighted, the doctor followed Marie,

who guided him towards the nest of the old blackbirds, and pointed with her finger to five eggs of a bluish colour, spotted and confusedly streaked with a tint of reddish-



THE NEST OF THE OLD BLACKBIRDS.

brown, on which the mother was sitting ; while her mate, perched on a green branch above, was whistling all kinds

of airs. While she was watching the nest, she suddenly found herself surrounded by five other blackbirds, warbling merrily, and disporting, according to their wont, in her tresses and upon her shoulders. Not only had all the fugitives returned, but they had also brought with them some other blackbirds. The latter, reassured by seeing with what security their companions played about, near Louis and Marie, approached them likewise, though still with some reserve, and a kind of half-confidence. They advanced, they paused, they looked; again they advanced, then they retired a little, wagging their tail, and twisting their head hither and thither with a quick sidelong movement. Marie flung to them a handful of seed,—at first, some distance off,—then, imperceptibly, nearer and nearer to herself,—and doing this so artfully, that at length they picked up the food out of her hands, encouraged, moreover, by the example of the friends who had introduced them into the garden, who mingled with them, and taught them by example.

“Charming birds!” murmured Louis.

Marie turned very softly towards M. de Bocourt that she might not alarm her new friends, exchanged with him a look in which he detected a true gleam of intelligence, and repeated, in great delight that she understood the words she articulated:—

“Charming birds!”

Then, after a visible effort of reflection, she added, with an expression of tenderness hitherto foreign to her voice,—

“Louis!”

So great was her emotion at this sudden development

of intelligence that she fell back, and fainted. The happy physician caught her in his arms, and she speedily recovered herself.

As soon as she felt restored, she fixed upon her friend her still languid eyes, and repeated, in a kind of ecstasy, as if to prove that she understood the idea underlying the words, "Charming birds! Louis!"

"Jeanne, Jeanne!" cried the physician, disturbed by an agitation of mind and heart not difficult to comprehend.

Jeanne ran to the spot, and she, too, lost all her self-command, when the orphan clasped her in her arms, and said, with a smile, "Jeanne! mamma!"

But the new happiness of Jeanne and Louis was soon disturbed by serious anxieties. In a nervous crisis of great violence Marie fell convulsively at their feet; they bore her to her couch, where she lay for a week in a dangerous fever. Her cousin and her foster-mother hung over her with constant devotion, trembling every minute lest they should lose one who was so very dear to them.

At last all danger disappeared; but the invalid remained excessively feeble, with a paleness which gave to her features a very different character from that they had hitherto worn. She longed to hold the hand of Jeanne and her cousin incessantly clasped in her own; and when, at times, they were compelled to leave her, tears poured down her sunken cheeks, formerly burned by the sun, but now of as dead a white as the flower of the camelia.

Notwithstanding their parental duties, the blackbirds

constantly entered by the open window, hopped about the bed of the convalescent, pressed her lips with their golden bill, and then flew off to their nests, to return after an interval of a few moments.

When, after a lapse of six weeks, Marie was able to descend into the garden, she found herself surrounded by a whole host of birds, most of whom scarcely knew how to fly, but showed themselves exceedingly eager to imitate their parents in their familiar tenderness for the young girl.

Marie joined her hands, and murmured, in a voice which happiness rendered tremulous, " Good birds ! good Louis ! good Jeanne ! "

Marie had learned to associate two ideas.

Henceforth, every day, every hour, brought some fresh manifestation of intelligence. As frail, delicate, and gentle as she was formerly robust and wild, she experienced an unconquerable sentiment of pleasure in perceiving the rays of light which gradually penetrated her darkness, and vivified her mind. Not only did she begin, after the fashion of little children, to prattle words which she understood, and whose meaning she could correctly apply, but her ideas also enlarged, and her phrases, growing less rudimentary, were expressed with clearness. While speaking, she always fixed her gaze upon Louis, and studied the expression of his countenance, to make sure that she was understood.

Her rapid progress terrified, while it delighted, M. de Boccourt, who made useless efforts to check a development of intelligence, dangerous, perhaps, and obtainable only at the expense of the health of the convalescent. He resolved

in some way to limit or arrest it; and one morning he announced to Marie, who could now understand what he said, that he intended to make an excursion into the forest.

"Marie—alone—here?" she inquired anxiously.

"No; Marie will come with me."

"Marie ill!" she answered, extending her thin arms, and raising herself with difficulty from her chair, to sink back into it discouraged.

"Marie will lean on her cousin's arm."

She looked at him with an indescribable expression. Then, after a moment's silence, she resumed:—

"Marie go everywhere with her cousin."

"Come, then," he said, placing on his pupil's head a straw hat, which she with her hand rejected.

He smiled, handed her the looking-glass, and said,—

"Marie is charming with her hat."

She looked at herself in the glass, smiled, by a graceful and instinctively feminine movement adjusted her hat, rose up, and said,—

"Louis, give your arm; Marie will go to the wood."

When they saw the two young people cross the boundary of the garden, a troop of blackbirds took to flight, and began to sweep joyously around them. None but the two mothers remained in their nests, together with their brood, who were as yet too feeble to follow them.

On finding herself once more in the depth of the wood, surrounded by her birds, intoxicated by the perfumes of the trees, and by the joyous cries of the blackbirds, Marie became, for a few moments at least, the wild creature of

former days. She lifted her eyes towards the cloud of blackbirds sweeping around her, mingled her cries with theirs, and flung aside her scarf to run towards a tree and climb it. But whether her strength failed her, or, that the eyes of Louis, encountering her own, awoke in her heart the new sentiment of shame, she paused, let fall around her the folds of her dress, and seated herself, or rather sank down, among the tall herbs surrounding them.

M. de Bocourt seated himself by her side, and flung into her lap a posy of wild flowers which he had been gathering. She hastily pushed it aside, a thorn of the eglantine having scratched her finger. With a kind of terror she looked at the little drops of blood which trickled from this slight wound, and stretched forth her hand to Louis, with a sentiment of surprise, shame, and suffering.

The young physician looked around him, and caught sight of a house-leek (*joubarbe*), which displayed, on a heap of old bricks which had been left lying in the place for years, its delicate reddish blossom, and those smooth, fleshy, hairy leaves, which give it the appearance of a real graminaceous plant. He picked a small shoot, crushed it, and rubbed Marie's scratched hand tenderly. The latter, who had looked on in mixed pain and curiosity, felt a sweet freshness immediately succeed the burning pain she had experienced.

"Good! good!" she cried.

"Good plant!" said Louis.

"Good plant! plant! plant!" she repeated, quite delighted at acquiring and expressing a new idea.

Louis picked up the nosegay, removed the wild brier



THE PLANT OF HEALING.

from it, and then handed it to his pupil, who, however, abruptly turned her head away in terror. He insisted that she should smell the perfume of the flowers, and it was not long before he saw his companion recover herself, and close her eyes the better to enjoy the new sensation.

Then he detached one by one from the nosegay the plants composing it, and initiated Marie in their delicate and varied odours, at the same time that he pointed out their exquisite forms. Soon she learned to admire in their infinite details—

The *dandelion*, enriched with a light feathery tuft, which loosens its hold and flies away at the least breath of air ;

The *daisy*, with its six white petals ;

The *silène*, which affects the shape of a goblet ;

The *hepatica*, with its bluish tint ;

The *bitter-sweet*,* with its large leaves, violet-tinted flowers, and clusters of black seeds ;

* A kind of wild vine-tree.

The *golden trefoil*, with its dainty metallic tufts ;
The *viperina*, glowing in purple ;
The *St. John's wort*, resembling a rosy heliotrope ;
The *snowy hawthorn* ;
The *wild tulip*, its petals bearded at the top ;
The *field cineraria*, covered with a cottony down ;
The *black vine*, and its greenish leaves ;
And the *grasses*, with delicate spikelets, suspended
around the stem like innumerable miniature bells.

As he brought these severally to her attention, he told her their names, which she repeated eagerly, and immediately engraved in her marvellous memory ; she took up one by one the plants spread out upon her knees ; she said over and over again their names, sometimes hesitatingly, nearly always without committing an error ; and she clapped her hands when she read in her cousin's eyes that she made no mistake in her nomenclature.

In the evening, when she returned home, she carried carefully her flowers, hastened to show them to Jeanne, designated them all by their names, and watched with surprise the actions of her nurse, who placed in a vase of water the plants beginning to wither. She seated herself before the table on which the nosegay was placed, and while enjoying with lively appetite an ample repast, she eyed each flower as it derived fresh life and colour from its contact with the beneficent fluid. At length, overcome by fatigue and the emotions of the day, she fell asleep in her nurse's arms ; and so sound was her slumber that it was not interrupted when they laid her on her bed, nor did it terminate until daybreak. Then she gaily

arose, and for the first time washed, alone and unaided, her face and arms in the water of the fountain which watered the garden, clapped her hands, and cried,—

“Louis, come and walk with Marie.”

The young doctor, moved even to tears, fell on his knees, and prayed. “Father! Father!” he exclaimed, “Thy name be blessed! This child has recovered her reason. She has expressed,” he continued, half murmuring to himself, “a complete and distinct idea! Words are no longer for Marie vague sounds, without sense or meaning. Praised be Thy name, O Father! Thanks to Thine infinite mercy, my task is about finished!”

In truth, from this day Marie made a progress so rapid that it delighted her tutor, and afforded to herself a gratification which she frankly expressed on the occasion of each new conquest made by her intelligence. At the same time, the traces of her prolonged illness wore away, and the young maiden, who began to read fluently, and to write already a legible hand, resembled in nothing the wild idiotic creature whom Jeanne, six years before, had brought to the solitudes of Saint-Florent-le-Vieil. But for her love for her blackbirds, whose number was constantly increased by new broods in whose company she walked about every morning, and who incessantly lavished upon her the evidences of a trustful and often imperious affection, you would have recognized with difficulty the imbecile bird-fancier in the beautiful young girl, wearing with the innate coquetry and gracefulness of women the picturesque Vendean costume.

She expressed herself with a delicacy and accuracy that

charmed every one who approached her; and the little peasants now, instead of insulting her as formerly, saluted her respectfully, and arranged themselves in decorous line to let the "young lady" pass. Jeanne, incessantly in a state of chronic ecstasy, exclaimed every moment,—

"Heaven has restored to me my Marie of the long ago!"

Towards autumn, M. de Bocourt, who for some weeks had been making frequent journeys alone, announced that he was under the necessity of leaving the farm-house for some time, and of going upon an expedition. When giving this information to Mademoiselle Deschamps, he saw her grow pale, and turn away her head to conceal her tears.

"I shall soon return!" he said.

"Soon!" she said; "yes, soon! is it not so? It seems to me that in going you take away with you both the life and reason which you have restored."

"Duty compels me to leave you for a few days: would you have me fail in that duty?"

"No," she replied; "I shall suffer; but go. I will ask for strength and resolution to bear the trial of that God whom you have taught me to know and love."

M. de Bocourt set out on the following morning. Marie, who had not slept all night, so soon as the last sounds of the carriage which bore away her cousin had ceased, seated herself underneath the tree where she had been accustomed to learn her lessons. On seeing their favourite, the blackbirds gathered round her; but they sang

their blithest airs and uttered their cleverest phrases without attracting her attention. Suddenly one of them pronounced the name of Louis, which all his companions immediately hastened to repeat.



UNDER THE OAK.

"Oh, Louis! Louis! Louis!" she cried, "when shall I see you again? when will *you* see him again, you birds, who love him just as I do?"

At this moment a carriage was heard upon the road; it stopped before the farm-gate.

"He has returned!" cried Marie, running towards the carriage.

It was not Louis, but an old lady, who advanced towards Marie, as she stood in confusion and dismay.

"My dear child," she cried with emotion, "come and embrace me, I pray you; I am your poor mother's sister, —your aunt,—and the mother of Doctor Louis," she added, with a pleasant smile.

"Oh, when will he return?" cried Marie, whose master had not taught her the art of concealing and repressing her thoughts.

"He will not return, my child."

"He will not return!" repeated Marie, piteously. "Must I then become once again a poor girl deprived of her reason? Oh, I would rather die!"

"He will not return; but you will go with me to recover him."

"When, oh when, I pray you?"

"This very moment; for Louis awaits us in the country-house which he purchased for me a year ago, about three miles from your little farmstead."

"Let us set out! Let us go at once!"

"Be it so, but upon one condition!"

"What is it? what is it? I agree to it before you name it."

"You must consent to live with me."

"With my mother's sister! With Louis' mother! Oh, I shall be the happiest of creatures!"

"That is not all; you must consent to become the wife of Louis."

"His wife?" demanded Marie; "become his wife? I don't know what that is! Never mind; I agree. But what are a wife's duties towards—"

"Her husband."

"Her husband?" repeated the young girl.

"These duties consist," resumed the old lady, "in vowing, before God, to love him to whom thenceforth one unites one's-self for ever—"

"Already I love Louis with all my soul."

"To obey him—"

"I always obey Louis gladly in everything."

"And to become the true daughter of his mother, who will love you as if you were her own child."

"Oh, I love you already nearly as well as I love Louis!"

"I shall take care, dearest, never to require from you the affection you will rightly bear towards your husband. Love me as your aunt, as your mother; I ask no more. Come; nothing remains but for you to accompany me. Let us go and rejoin my son."

"Oh yes, let us hasten to join him!" said Marie.

She had already passed through the garden-gate, when she suddenly paused.

"Mother," she exclaimed, "I have another mother whom I cannot forsake. But for her tender care, your daughter would have died, abandoned by all."

"I was so well prepared for this, my child, that Jeanne has already taken her place in my carriage, and is waiting for you."

"Come, come! let us set out!" exclaimed Marie, clapping her hands.

"You regret nothing that you leave behind you, dearest?"

"Oh yes! I regret the place where I have lived so happily in *his* company, where he has restored to me life and reason, whither you came to bless me with a mother!"

"Well, you shall often return with your husband to visit this little farm-house, to revive your memories of it, and to see again your cherished birds, my little fairy; for

Louis has told me of your affection for *them*, and their tenderness for *you*."

"My birds will not leave me," replied Marie.

"Yet I cannot make room in my carriage for the living and warbling troop flying around and above us."

Marie raised her head towards the blackbirds, clapped her hands, and pointed out to them the carriage, in which, a moment afterwards, she seated herself by the side of her aunt and opposite her nurse. The horses started off.



MARIE AND LOUIS.

Immediately the birds sprang into the air, and flew above the carriage until it entered, and drew up, inside the enclosures of a charming country mansion, on whose steps stood Louis.

"Marie! Marie!" he cried, clasping his betrothed in his arms, and, for the first time, pressing on her brow a kiss.

"My dear Marie," said Louis' mother, pointing to the

blackbirds, some of whom were perched on the surrounding trees, while others were already foraging in an abundant store of berries gathered beforehand for their satisfaction, "are you glad and satisfied that you find here all the treasures of your solitary home—your cousin, your nurse, your birds?"

"Ah!" replied Marie, as she flung herself into Madame de Bocourt's arms, "I also find here a treasure which I have lost for many years—a mother!"





CHAPTER X.

THE CROW.

THE CROW—HIS HABITS, MANNERS, AND CUSTOMS—WANT OF MATERNAL IMPULSE IN THE FEMALE—ILL REPUTE OF THE CROW—CICERO AND THE CROW—VALERIUS AND THE GAUL—THE THIEVING MAGPIE OF PALAISEAU—THE EAGLE AND THE CROWS—THE SPECKLED MAGPIE—TORTURE OF A BIRD—THE SPECKLED MAGPIE OF FRANCIS I.

THE Crow is the largest of our European *Passeres*; a tribe well represented by their common type, the sparrow. We meet him everywhere, without being able to say that he is very common. He inhabits forests, rocks, and ruins, and descends into the plains only to seek his food—that is to say, insects, seeds, fruits, fresh or putrid meat, and, too frequently,

little half-fledged birds, which he steals from the maternal nest during the absence of the parents.

The true crow, the *corax* of the ornithologists, is known by his straight, short, compact bill—a little swollen on either side—convex and recurved towards its slope; its nostrils hidden by stiff hairs; by the fourth large feather of its wings being longer than the others; and by its uniformly even and rounded tail.

The *Black Crow* (*corax*) measures about eighteen inches from the tip of his beak to the extremity of his tail; purple reflections, in the light, irradiate his beautiful jetty plumage; the iris of his intelligent but malicious eye is composed of two circles, one a grayish-white, the other an ashy-brown, and his robust legs seem cut out of ebony.

The crow is found in America and Africa, where his habits differ in no respects from the habits of his kind in Europe. Solitary and sedentary, he constructs his nest in the steepest and most isolated localities he can meet with: towards March, his mate lays three eggs of a dirty green, spotted and streaked here and there with brown; the young are hatched towards the end of April, are, at their birth, nearly always white, and in no respect bear any resemblance to their parents.

The female, relieved from the cares and fatigues of incubation, takes her ease after the birth of her brood, and leaves to the male the care of providing for the nourishment of the new-born until the latter are able to support themselves. As soon as this desirable state of things arrives, their parents, whose affection, as we see, is not *very* profound, drive them away with bill and wing,

without even permitting them to install themselves in the paternal district ; they must be off about their business, and seek a new home afar.

I do not know whether the crows are indebted to their want of parental affection or their gloomy livery for the evil renown which clings to them ; but, at all events, from the highest antiquity, they have been regarded as birds of evil augury.

The Romans were accustomed from an aerial encounter between the crows and other birds to predict the approach of a fatal war ; and even nowadays, in many countries, their nests are pitilessly destroyed, under a pretence that their neighbourhood is productive of misfortune. In Brittany, and in certain districts of the southern departments of France, the populace will not suffer a crow to perch on the roof of their cottages, but drive him away with showers of stones ; for he comes, they say, because *he smells death*.

The crow, nevertheless, is one of the birds most easily and most successfully tamed, and which most fully and readily accept the society of men. He possesses, moreover, a remarkable facility for learning to talk.

The Romans held the talking crows in high esteem, and willingly paid high prices for them. Pliny refers to a crow which, every morning, came of his own accord to the public place, and there saluted by name the reigning emperor, rendering this curious homage to Cæsar, Augustus, and Tiberius. Sometimes, to the great amusement of the idlers frequenting the Forum, he would repeat some fragments which he had caught up of the discourses of the orators ; and, on a certain day, Cicero himself was inter-

rupted by the presence of the crow, which eagerly exclaimed, and would not be checked, *Tace, nebulo!* (Silence, fool!)—an apostrophe which some passer by had addressed to the bird, and which the latter thought proper to transfer, with his shrill harsh voice, to the famous orator. Notwithstanding Cicero's readiness and self-confidence, he was disconcerted by so unexpected an interruption.

Schwenckfeld, the author of the *Aviarium Silesiæ*, speaks of a crow brought up by a German peasant, which, at intervals, joined his fellow-birds in their aerial flights. One fine day he disappeared, and did not return at night-fall, as was his habit. Two years passed by, and the farmer had forgotten his crow, when one day, while traversing a forest some sixty or seventy miles from his house, he heard his name pronounced "aloft." Raising his head at so singular an interpellation, he saw a swarm of jet-black birds wheeling and swooping around him, and from their midst emerged a crow which perched upon his shoulder, lavished upon him all kinds of caresses, and thenceforth would not be separated from him.

Another crow, belonging to Valerius, of which Pliny also speaks, not only manifested an excessive affection towards his master, but also accompanied him to battle, and, at need, defended him valiantly.

One day, on the eve of an engagement, a Gaul, of gigantic stature and unequalled strength, defied to single combat, in presence both of his own and the Roman army, the Roman soldiers who lay behind their entrenchments.

Though of small size, and no great physical power, Valerius, when his comrades hesitated before so formidable a foe hastened to the attack. The Gaul, instead of using



AN UNEXPECTED RECOGNITION.

his sword, caught Valerius in his brawny arms, and was on the point of strangling him, when suddenly the Roman champion's favourite bird leaped on the head of the Gaul, fastened his claws in his tawny locks, and delivered such well-aimed blows with his keen beak, that he almost instantaneously blinded him in both eyes. Valerius — a victor through this unforeseen auxiliary — received from his companions, retained, and transmitted to his descendants the surname of *Corvinus*.

The crow, like the magpie, picks up, steals, and carries to his nest, or conceals in the most careful manner in some secret corner, a host of ob-

jects, which he can make no use of, and which he soon forgets. The medieval legend-books are full of stories of larcenies committed by magpies or crows, but attributed to poor people, who, however, eventually escape punishment through the opportune discovery of the stolen objects.

At other times, as in the popular tale of the servant-girl of Palaiseau, the magpie is caught *in delicto flagrante*—in the very flush of his wickedness—at the moment that the unfortunate victim of suspicion is being led to the gibbet, and is only saved from a disgraceful death by the arrival of a messenger with the announcement of the detection of the true thief.

I spoke just now about the bravery of the crow. I remember a story in connection with this subject, which I shall here repeat, in the hope it may help to re-establish the plundering bird in the esteem of my readers.

In the fine woods surrounding the Château des Étangs, an estate in Brie belonging to the Princess Bacciocchi, a royal eagle suddenly made his appearance, and after hovering for some time above the loftiest trees, swooped down upon one of them, and there established his domicile.

Wherefore had he come? Why had he abandoned the mountains for the plain? Who could say? I cannot too often repeat to my readers that life, like science, is composed of questions without answers.

Whatever his reason for change of habitation, no sooner was the eagle installed than he began to hunt the hares, rabbits, and partridges; and, on a certain occasion, he did not even disdain to make a meal off crows.

On the following day, the royal bird found himself



A TERRIBLE PURSUER.

assailed by a troop of about five hundred crows, which had resolved to avenge upon him the loss of their brothers.

The eagle, with his wings and beak, soon scattered the audacious assailants, and dined pleasantly upon the two or three wounded ones left on the field of battle.

This brisk skirmish took place about three o'clock in

the afternoon. At six o'clock, another battalion of crows—or, rather, a whole array of from five to six thousand combatants—returned to the charge.

The eagle resisted heroically; he received many severe blows; but he returned them a hundredfold. In such wise that, to use the expression of an eye-witness, there was an actual torrent of blood and feathers.

Night alone put an end to the battle. The crows, after sunset, scattered about in all directions; the greatest number took refuge in the ruins of the castle formerly inhabited by Charles VI. and Odette de Champdivers, and where, be it said, playing-cards were invented.

Next day, at sunrise, the black army, augmented by new troops recruited during the night by agents and trusty messengers, returned to the combat; it was divided into five bodies, arranged in the shape of a fan, which fell simultaneously upon their enemy; the sky was to some extent obscured by the living and moving crowds.

It is impossible to say what might have been the issue of this combat against such thousands of enemies, when a gamekeeper, attracted to the theatre of war by their unearthly cries, fired at the eagle, and brought him down.

The noble bird fell directly at his murderer's feet, but this did not prevent the crows from whirling around the carcass of the assassinated hero. After which they dispersed abroad in the airy space, and ere long not one was to be seen or heard.

The keeper, having satisfied himself that the eagle was completely dead, for he feared the force of his beak, and the sharp, strong nails of his talons, carried him off, and measured

him—with an old yard-measure, too!—as if he were a common piece of stuff. His victim, from the tip of one wing to that of the other, measured seven feet and a half.

The *Speckled Magpie* closely approximates to the crow in his habits, and displays an equal degree of intelligence; but his cruelty, in his wild state, it is almost impossible to explain.



A REFINEMENT OF CRUELTY.

He never fails, when not too keenly pressed by hunger, to spit on the thorns and spines of the nearest bushes the great insects he captures, and even the little new-born birds which he steals alive from the maternal nest. Perched on some neighbouring branch, he delights to contemplate his victims as they struggle convulsively in their agony, and he listens with marked complacency to

the despairing cries they utter. Sometimes he allows whole hours to pass by before he decides on giving them the final blow. Often even, after having enjoyed their tortures, he departs without touching them, and abandons them to a lingering and painful death.

As with the crow, domesticity softens, or, more correctly speaking, completely transforms the character of the magpie, which is then found to be capable of great affection for his master. With a rare intelligence, he learns in a very brief period to pronounce words, and even entire phrases, which he often repeats with felicitous opportuneness, and as if he fully understood their mean-



HERON AND MAGPIE

ing. The historian Turnus relates that King Francis I. possessed a magpie of this species. He carried the bird with him to the chase—on his wrist, like a falcon—and, let us add, he rivalled the falcons in skill and audacity. Not recoiling even before the heron, he flew boldly at this noble bird, which is ten times larger than himself, whirled around him, and at last fell straight upon his head, and blinded him with a couple of blows from his ready beak. Crowned with the laurels of victory, he returned to perch himself on the royal wrist, kissed with his blood-red bill his master's lips, and said to him, clearly and gaily: "We have hunted well, Sire!"

The speckled magpie differs from other birds of his species in the colours of his plumage, which is of a bluish-gray, mixed with shades of rose, chestnut, and white. A black band extends from his beak to his ears, crossing the eye. A nomad, he wanders about with his family, reaching France early in spring, and leaving it for Africa, or even South America, at the beginning of autumn.

We extract from an article by M. Vian in the *Revue Zoologique* the following curious details respecting the crow:—

"On the 5th of March 1865, I was walking in a small valley near Meulan. It is partly planted with old poplar-trees, where large companies of crows have, for many years, been in the habit of building and breeding. It does not appear they were still working at their nests.

"On one of the trees, seven birds had assembled round an old nest, and filled the air with their loud harsh

croaks. From time to time a single crow would arrive and perch upon the nest ; then a second would join him : a few seconds afterwards, the two birds let themselves drop fourteen or fifteen feet below the nest, and flew away together towards the hills.

"The comers were not always in accord, and I saw as many as three go away unaccompanied as they had come. Twenty times in the course of an hour was the scene renewed, and yet the nest never bore more than a couple of birds at the same time.

"I thought for an instant that the ceremony had terminated ; after the first quarter of an hour, the whole troop had disappeared. But a few minutes afterwards seven crows took up their positions around the nest, and the scene recommenced : it was still going on when I had left.

"Some hours afterwards, observing a great number of crows upon the hill-sides which overlooked the valley, I asked a peasant if he understood the reason of their assemblage. He replied : ' This is a great day with the crows ; all those in this part of the country, and perhaps all in France, meet together ; the same thing takes place every year at the same epoch.' Unfortunately, here his observations ended.

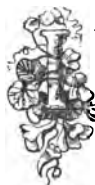
"It seemed to me, I confess, that I had been present at the marriage-ceremonies of the young crows born in the preceding year. Not a detail was wanting. There were the seven witnesses, the presentation of the marriageable females, the selection by the male, the marriage, and the honeymoon-tour of the wedded pair ! "



CHAPTER XI.

THE OWL.

ADVENTURES OF AN OWL—AN OWL NAILED TO A DOORWAY—HIS RELEASE
—HE BECOMES MY GUEST—HIS HABITS AND MANNERS—OUR MUTUAL
FRIENDSHIP—HIS NEST—COMBAT BETWEEN STRIX AND THE SPARROWS
—THE COMMON OWL—THE CRESTED OWL—THE PRAY—THE BURROW-
ING OWL.



WENT the other day to pay a visit to one of my friends who occupies a high position in the magistracy. To my extreme surprise, I found an owl perched upon his arm-chair; and he showed neither fear nor astonishment when I made my entrance.

"Where did you get that bird?" said I to my friend.

"It is quite a romance, and, if you like, I will tell you

all about it," replied the magistrate; "but first, let me give you an *example* of the intelligence of my feathered companion.—Strix," he cried to the owl, "salute Monsieur Berthoud!"

Strix opened wide his wings, flew across the room, and perched himself on my shoulder. Then he rubbed his head against my face in a friendly manner, and returned to his master.

"Where is my pen?" exclaimed the latter. "Surely I must have let it fall."

With two flaps of his wings, Strix was on the floor, and with his short curved beak picked up the pen, and conveyed it to his master.

"Now that you have made Strix's acquaintance, and have been a witness to his intelligence," continued the magistrate, "I will tell you his story:—

"There exists among the customs of this part of the country a very cruel one, which testifies equally to ignorance and ingratitude. I refer to the hateful custom of nailing alive, on a door or gate, the owls and screech-owls which by accident fall into the hands of the country-people. Not only are the latter guilty of a bad action by subjecting these poor birds to slow tortures, as frightful as they are useless, but they also deprive themselves of an ally who would clear their fields and gardens from injurious insects, and the rodents which do so much damage.

"Five or six months ago, in an excursion in the neighborhood of Paris, I found one of these poor birds, a common owl, crucified against a farm-house door, and on the point

of dying; for he had been suspended there a couple of days, without food, and with a large nail in each wing.

"I began to release him from his gibbet; but, immediately, the farmer interfered.

"'What, sir!' he cried, 'would you prevent us from killing this wretch of a bird, or from inflicting on him the punishment he so well deserves for the mischief he is always doing?'

"'But what harm has he done to you?'

"'The night before last, he planted himself on the roof of our house, and never ceased to utter his gloomy and terrific shrieks. I acknowledge that my children, my wife, and myself were dying with fear. Armed with a loaded fowling-piece, I descended into the garden, and fired, as well as I could see, at the ugly creature, which, directly afterwards, fell plump at my feet. Then I called my lads: they came with a light, and I saw the owl lying on his back, and endeavouring—the beast!—to defend himself with his beak and claws. I threw a sack over him, and kept him in it till morning: afterwards, with great care—which, however, did not prevent me from receiving three or four great gashes in my hand—I nailed him where you see him, and where he is suffering what he deserves.'

"A host of moral and agricultural reflections rose to my lips, to demonstrate irrefragably to my interlocutor how wrongly he was acting, and to contradict his idle stories; but, on consideration, I thought my discourse would be useless, and recurred to a more plausible and effective kind of logic, drawing my purse from my pocket.

"'For how much will you sell me this owl?' I asked.

“‘Eh, what do you want with it?’ answered the peasant, astonished at so absurd a proposal.

“‘That matters not to you,’ rejoined I, smiling. ‘Come, what price do you put upon this bird?’

“‘My faith, sir, if you have a fancy for it, take it for nothing!’

“To cut short the dispute, I called one of the farmer’s children who was playing in the garden, and put into his



BARTERING FOR AN OWL.

hand a coin. It made his eyes flash with joy; but his father hastened to take it from him.

“‘Give it to me!’ he said to the poor little fellow, who looked at him with a glance of mingled fear and disappointment. ‘Give it to me! I will use it to buy you some nice things in the town, when next I go there,’ he added, somewhat confused, and not altogether without shame as he turned towards me, but, nevertheless, placing the coin in the recesses of his waistcoat-pocket.

"The child wept, and I can never see children weep without endeavouring to console them. Now, as there was no other means of checking the tears of my young friend than by a second application to my purse, I drew forth another franc, which the little fellow immediately seized, and clasped convulsively in his hand, at the same time that, to make sure of his treasure, he fled away as fast as his legs would carry him.

"'Well, then, now the owl is mine; is it not? Be kind enough to lend me a ladder and a pair of pincers.'

"The peasant, whose physiognomy became more and more a picture of *puzzledom*, did as I requested, and I set to work to release the owl, which, not comprehending my charitable intentions, tore my hand with one of his claws. At the sight of my wound, the peasant broke out into a fit of laughter, which did not prevent me from extracting the nails and delivering the poor bird, whom I wrapped up in my handkerchief. Afterwards, I put on a thick pair of gloves to save me from a fresh scratch, deposited the bird on the turf, and poured into his beak a few drops of water, which seemed to reanimate him.

"Thenceforth he apparently understood that I was kindly disposed towards him; and allowed me, without resistance, to bestow on him the necessary attentions.

"I began by washing clean his wounds, wherein the flies had already deposited their larvæ; and by binding up with a bandage, made out of my pocket-handkerchief, his right wing, which the farmer's bullet had broken. With a little collodion, which I always carry in a small flask in my rural excursions, I laved the poor creature's other wounds, as well as the scratch on my own finger.

"The owl, his eyes bloodshot with feverish agony, looked at me with as much surprise as the peasant; while, resolved not to stop short in my character of the good Samaritan, I shook down from a neighbouring tree a shower of cockchafers. Some of these I presented to the bird, who ate them greedily.

"And what are you going to do with the beast?" inquired the farmer, when he saw the owl's gradual resuscitation.

"Restore him to liberty."

"He will not enjoy it long," he replied, shaking his head. "Wounded as he is, he cannot fly away; and in less than ten minutes my boys will be after him, and pelt him to death with stones."

"Ah, well, I shall carry him to Paris," I exclaimed; while secretly asking myself what on earth should I do with an owl in my apartments.

"Just as you please," replied the peasant, who was evidently laughing at me. "Hold! here is a basket which will answer as well as a cage for carrying your treasure. I will sell it cheap."

"This meant that he intended to charge me an exorbitant sum; which, however, I paid him, while laughing at my own absurdity.

"The owl offered no objection to being deposited in the basket; and, with my singular acquisition in my hands, I betook myself to the railway.

"When I found myself once more in Paris, and at home, I asked myself anew what I was going to do with my owl; and began to look at him—no, *her*—with an attention which, during the excitement of my Samaritanism, I had not had time to bestow.

"I found the bird to be not *he*, but *she* ; a female, and a young female, of the species known as *Strix otus*, or the common owl. White, red, and brown tints characterized the plumage of her head and mantle; her belly was shaded with brown; red was the prevailing hue of her breast and tail, whose feathers I found to be striped with nine deeper belts or bars of the same colour. During my inspection, the bird, of her own accord, issued from the basket, gained with some difficulty the back of my study-chair, planted herself upon it comfortably and solidly, began to smooth down her disordered plumes, and gazed at me steadfastly with eyes whose pupil dilated in the gradually gathering gloom of evening. I went to her, and stroked her back gently with my fingers; a caress which she received with evident satisfaction, and returned by rubbing her head gently against the back of my hand.

"Thenceforth a compact of amity was concluded between us; and *Strix*—for I adopted her ornithological name—has since been a companion as tender as faithful.

"Like the cat, she always distinguished herself by her exquisite cleanliness; and never failed, when I opened my window in the morning, to go outside, and free herself from every impurity in a particular corner which she devoted to this hygienic task. Afterwards she entered my dressing-room, dabbled with evident pleasure in a tub of water, and brought to her toilet the most careful nicety. Next she proceeded to her breakfast, which consisted either of insects brought in from the country by my gardener, or of strips of sheep's-liver. As soon as she was satisfied, she resumed her customary position on the back of my arm-chair. From this post she followed my slightest

movements, and seemed to bestow the greatest attention upon what I wrote. If I rose from my seat, she sprang upon my shoulder, and followed me into another apartment. On going out for a walk, I caressed her affectionately, saying, '*Au revoir*, my Strix!' And Strix, sadly plunging her head between her wings, was soon asleep.

"When I returned home, she heard and recognized my footsteps on the stairs, uttered a shrill cry of welcome, clapped her wings, and, the moment I entered my room, lavished upon me all the signs of joy and friendship which a dog lavishes under similar circumstances.

"Though her broken wing prevented her from taking any long flight, Strix, especially in the beautiful spring evenings, would perch upon my balcony, and even at times indulge in aerial excursions to the roofs of the neighbouring houses. I did not trouble myself about these absences; only I left my window open, that Strix might re-enter whenever she thought proper.

"But gradually her absences became much more frequent, and, one night, Strix did not return home. I confess I was really disturbed, and thought some accident must have happened to my friend. Next morning at day-break I heard her beak rattling against the glass, and hastened to open the window to the prodigal, whom I received like a spoiled child; in other words, with caresses.

"From that day I remarked that my owl—a female, as I have told you—was strangely preoccupied. Disquieted and feverish, she went to and fro about my room; no longer slept a part of the day, according to her custom; and one evening I surprised her in the act of breaking in pieces my paper basket. Bit by bit, indeed, she carried

off the whole basket; then she recommenced her nocturnal excursions, which were prolonged until morning; and finally she returned only in the evening, for a short interval, to take her food hurriedly, and disappear again.

"This curious conduct puzzled me so much that I resolved to discover the cause of it, and for this purpose resorted to *espionnage*. After closely watching her for two or three days, I ascertained that, on leaving the house, she took refuge in a garden whose great trees surround my old and solitary Faubourg Saint-Germain. From Duke de —, my friend, the owner of the garden, I readily obtained permission to carry my observations further. And at dawn one day I contrived to surprise Madam Strix in the act of proceeding towards a ruined turret dating from the sixteenth century, which, after having undoubtedly served as a staircase for a building no longer in existence, was now reduced to a very humiliating condition of uselessness and decay. I clambered with much difficulty up the broken steps of the tower, until I reached the summit. And there I saw, in a corner, Strix!—Strix employed in feeding, with the meat she obtained at my house, four little downy owlets, which opened, to their full and measureless extent, their large, yellow, insatiable beaks. The fugitive did not display the slightest alarm at my abrupt and unexpected surprise of herself and her brood. She continued peacefully and undisturbed her distribution among her progeny. And when the task was finished, she gently raised her head, and fixed upon me her great golden eyes, full of an indescribable expression of tenderness.

"I related to Duke de — the singular spectacle I had witnessed, and expressed my desire to pay a visit, every



A RETIRED FAMILY.

morning or evening, to the young mother. Thenceforth I regularly purveyed to her the dishes to which I knew

she was partial. The little ones not only became imperceptibly accustomed to my presence; but in the end recognized my footsteps at a distance, and hailed with tiny cries my coming, which they knew to be a sign of a fresh supply of provender. Even the male, who at first held himself aloof with much suspicion, gained confidence in my intentions, acquiesced in the ties of friendship which bound me to his family; and every morning all seven of us fraternized with a familiarity which, I frankly confess, did not a little affect me.

"About six weeks later, the Duke de —— set out for the country with all his household; and I was compelled to renounce, though not without regret, my daily visits to my feathered friends.

"One evening, I found the parents and their young ones all installed in my apartment.

"I acknowledge that if I was sensible of this evidence of trust and affection, I felt myself curiously embarrassed by it. Yet as one does not every day have owls as visitors, I considered it an honour to discharge worthily the duties of so uncommon a hospitality; and I served up to my friends, with my own hands, the meat, cut into strips, of a fine piece of beef, which my cook had intended to roast next day for my breakfast.

"My six guests did not leave a fragment of the repast. After which the male and his four children clacked their bills as an incontestable sign of farewell greeting, and flew away, leaving Strix at home, who thenceforth resumed her former habits, as if she had never dropped them.

"As witnesses to the truth of the story I have related, I may name not only the Duke de —, but all the people in his establishment, not to speak of my own household and friends.

"I shall conclude by telling you of a little mishap to which Strix fell a victim only last week. I had gone to spend two or three days in the country, and had instructed my servant, who was on very good terms with my owl, to see that she wanted for nothing, that the window was opened for her, morning and evening, and was finally closed after the bird's return.

"On the day I came home, and about noon, I heard outside my apartment a din of discordant cries. I opened the window-blinds, and on the window-sill stood Strix, assailed by a hundred desperate sparrows. They were attacking her with heavy blows, and plucking off her feathers, without her making any attempt to repel them or defend herself. My presence put to flight the little army, and I took up in my hands the bleeding and astonished owl, who did not recover her composure for fully an hour afterwards.

"My servant had forgotten to open my window in the morning; and Strix, compelled to remain outside, was quickly caught sight of by the sparrows, who had hastened to avenge upon her the death of some of their kind slain by the bird of prey. They felt sure of impunity; for by day the light nearly strikes blind an owl—and as the sun was falling full on the window where Strix had taken up her post, the glare absolutely rendered it impossible for her to defend herself against enemies she could not see."

And, in fact, the enormous pupil of the crepuscular birds permits the simultaneous entrance of a great quantity of solar rays, and prevents their retina from supporting the lustre when it is not tempered by twilight.

On the other hand, by way of compensation, these birds possess such a delicacy of hearing that they can distinctly catch the feeblest and most distant sounds, and their sense of smell is scarcely less powerful. Naturalists give them the scientific designation of *Strix otus*.

The beak of the owl is short, like that of the Screech-owl and the Snowy-owl; but he differs from the latter in the completeness of his facial disc, the sharpness of their wings, and the two more or less movable tufts which surmount their head: their auditorial *conque* consists of a semicircle, and is provided with a membranous operculum.

The Common Owl (*Otus communis*, Lesson; *Strix otus*, Linné; vulgarly called the Long-eared Owl) belongs to a species spread over all Europe, and very common in France, where he lives a sedentary life. His tufts, composed of six feathers, equal to half his head in length, surmount his eyes; his plumage is of a tawny colour, with brown longitudinal spots on the back and under parts. His wings and back are ornamented with brown stripes; his tail, with eight or nine. His stature measures about thirteen inches.

Generally, these birds dwell in caverns, ruined buildings, the hollows of ancient trees, and in unfrequented forests: during the night they utter a plaintive cry, or rather a kind of grave and prolonged groan.

Bird-catchers make use of owls to attract other birds

within their snare, and compel him to utter this cry in open day. Immediately all the neighbouring birds hasten to throw themselves on an enemy whom they suppose to be in distress, and are caught in nets arranged round about the nocturnal bird.

The owl very seldom builds a nest. The female frequently lays in the abandoned nests of the squirrel, magpie, or crow, four or five oblong and very white eggs, whose major axis measures five, and whose minor, twelve lines. He feeds upon small birds, and especially upon voles and field-mice: when these rodents are wanting, he penetrates even into barns in search of rats and mice, returning to his lair at early dawn.

Unlike most of the *Raptores*, the Horn-Owl is sociably inclined. He is frequently seen in bands of seven or eight individuals, associated for the sake of poaching, and it is very difficult to disperse and terrify them, without preventing them from assembling anew.

The Short-eared Owl (*Otus brachyotus*, Cuvier; *Strix ulula*, Gmelin; commonly called the Sparrow Owl) resembles the common owl in stature and plumage. His back is not marked by any network of lines, but his belly by narrow longitudinal stripes; his tufts, which are of very small size, occupy the centre of his forehead, and are composed of two or three feathers, squarely raised.

This bird inhabits the north, and ranges over nearly the whole of Europe; he regularly visits France. He is even more distinguished for his sociability than the common

owl. He lives almost constantly on the ground, where he lies in wait for the little rodents which afford his principal sustenance. It is on the ground, too, he constructs his nest.

The Common White or Barn Owl, the *Strix flammea* of Linné, is found in various parts of the world, and is very common in France, where he lives a sedentary life. About fourteen inches in length, the upper portions of his plumage are tinted of a reddish-yellow, mixed with gray and brown, and speckled with black and white; the under parts are white or yellow, besprinkled with blackish or brownish dots. His face is white or gray, and the orbit of his eyes of a more or less reddish-brown; the tail is lightly barred with brown. The black-brown iris of his eyes gives him a very peculiar character.

In Southern France, the country people designate him *buéou-l'holi*; because they believe he comes at night and drinks the oil burning in the lamps of the churches. He is also vulgarly named *chouette de clochers*, or belfry-owl; while another name, the *effraie*, he undoubtedly owes to the terror he inspires, says Buffon, by his whistling *che, chei, cheu, chubou*; his harsh and singular *grei, gré, crei*; and the broken accents with which he frequently disturbs the silence of the night.

To some extent a domestic bird, he dwells in the midst of populous towns; towers, belfries, the roofs of churches and other buildings, serve him as a place of retreat during the day, and he issues forth at the hour of twilight. His whistle, which he repeats incessantly, resembles the breathing of a man who sleeps with his mouth open; he utters also, when flying or at rest, other harsh shrill sounds, which are

all so disagreeable, that, combined with the idea of the neighbourhood of graveyards and churches, and with the darkness and gloom of night, they inspire a not unnatural horror and fear in the minds of children and women, and even of men, who believe in sorceries, auguries, and similar superstitions.

Everybody regards the screech-owl as a funereal bird,*

* A similar superstition long prevailed in England, as will be seen from the following illustrative passages :—

Chaucer refers to the screech-owl as—

“The prophet he of woe and of mischance.”

(*Legend of Philomel.*)

And again, as—

“The oule eke, that of deth the bode bringeth.”

(*Assembly of Fowles.*)

It is mentioned by Spenser—

“The whistler shrill, that whose hears doth die.”

And Ben Jonson says,—

“Hark, hark, hark, the foul

Bird !....

Peace, you shall hear her scritch.”

(*The Sad Shepherd.*)

William Browne, the poet of “*Britannia's Pastorals*,” calls

“The screech-owl's cry

The fit musician of a tragedy ;”

and elsewhere speaks of

“The screech-owl, with her utmost power, labouring her loathed note.”

So Shakespeare, who has noticed everything, has noticed this bird of evil omen : in “*Macbeth*”—

“The fatal bellman,

That gives the stern'st good-night ;”

and King Henry VI. says to Gloucester,—

“The owl shrieked at thy birth,—an evil sign.”

In a tragedy published about 1600, it is said that when people are upon the point of death,—

“The ugly screech-owl,....

With flapping wings and hideous croaking noise,

Does beat the casement of this fatal house.”

Heywood, in “*The Rape of Lucrece*,” calls the bird “an ominous fowle.”

and a messenger of death: they believe that when he plants himself on the roof of a house, and gives utterance to sounds differing from his accustomed cries, it is a summons to some fated individual. The grave is open for him! This ill-repute, with which popular superstition has invested the screech-owl, ought, however, to be replaced by a sentiment of gratitude and good-will; for, of all the nocturnal *Raptores*, he is the most useful to man, and wages a destructive war against rats, mice, and other rodents injurious to agriculture.

The screech-owl lays three or four elongated eggs, of a pure white.

In sober truth, these birds are the falcons of the night. Observing attentively the two species of which I have just spoken, you will discover a close resemblance in the form of their beak and their talons. Only the eye of the owl is more dilated, as is the case in all animals destined to hunt for their food by the pale gleam of twilight.

As we have already said, the nocturnal birds possess an extraordinary development of the organs of sight and hearing. Besides, their silent flight enables them to seize furtively the prey they entrap during the still hours of night, when the slightest sound would arouse the threatened animals.

During their visits to England, says Franklin, in the midst of seemingly boundless heaths, covered here and there with thick tall grasses, sometimes a couple of owls, —sometimes even a whole family,—after establishing their domicile in a place which pleases them, will in their turn



A BIRD OF EVIL OMEN.

occupy the same lair, and, accordingly, their habits can be studied at leisure.

They display towards their family an extreme attachment.

It is said that young owlets, though sufficiently tamed to receive their food from their master's hands, will suddenly break out into fits of fury. If you look about you, you will find that the cage in which you keep them has been suspended at night outside your window, and that the parents of the captives have visited and fed them during the darkness.

Another example of the same maternal solicitude confirms this supposition.

A Swedish gentleman was the occupant of a farm-house which lay at the foot of a mountain, near whose summit a couple of great owls had built their nests. On a day in July, one of the owlets, having quitted the nest, was caught by a servant. The bird was already clothed in feathers; but among these feathers, which had not yet attained their full size, the down of infancy was occasionally visible.

The prisoner was immediately confined within a large poultry-cage. On the following morning, to the great surprise of the farm-people, a beautiful partridge was found lying dead before the door of the said cage. They immediately came to the conclusion that the partridge had been deposited there by the parents of the bird, who had undoubtedly occupied part of the night in hunting for the advantage of their lost progeny.

Nor were they mistaken: for, night after night, during a whole fortnight, the mysterious purveyors renewed and kept up the supply, depositing near the cage pieces

of game, and, more particularly, fresh-slain partridges. Sometimes they did not even shrink from the labour of transporting, to regale their little prisoner, birds larger than themselves, such as moor-fowl,—and even legs and shoulders of lamb!

The Swedish gentleman and his servants took up, for several successive nights, a post of observation at a window, so as to see how and when these provisions were brought. But they never succeeded in their design. The owls, owing to their extraordinary keenness of sight, seized the opportunity when their watchers were less vigilant, to provision the little one for whom they exhibited so keen a solicitude.

In the month of August they ceased to discharge this daily duty, and disappeared. This month is, in fact, the epoch when the parent birds abandon their young to their own devices, drive them from the nest, and compel them to establish their own domiciles at a very respectable distance.

From this anecdote the reader will conjecture how vast a quantity of game the larger species of owls destroy, to say nothing of the fact that many feed upon fish, and completely devastate the fish-ponds.

There exists a very beautiful species of owl, known as the Snowy Owl (*Strix nyctea*).

This white bird may, without any disadvantage, be compared, from his stature and dignified appearance, to the golden eagle; and hence he is named the *King of the Owls*.

He rarely visits France, but limits his excursions to the barrenest and most desolate regions of the North, where he lives solitarily among the eternal snows.

The plumage of the adult is of a dazzling snowy white, with only a few specks upon his head.



THE SNOWY OWL.

During the three months of summer in those inhospitable regions the temperature of the atmosphere does not rise above freezing-point, and for the remainder of the year sinks far below it. Nature, therefore, invests the snowy owl with a mass of down and feathers forming more than two-thirds of his whole body. With the exception of the tip of his beak and the extremities of his black claws, no portion of his person is

exposed to the severities of the atmosphere; while his white colour, in a country where nearly all is white, renders it impossible for the animals on which he preys to descry him in time to escape, when he hovers silently over the snowy deserts.

As may be supposed, the manners of the snowy owl are not very well known.

Two of these birds, male and female, were, however,

killed in Northumberland during the rigorous winter of 1823. A few days before the rifle terminated their existence, they had been seen among the rocks which rear their rugged cliffs above the solitary marshes. Sometimes perched upon the snow, sometimes motionless on a great isolated stone, they entrapped and caught their prey with the utmost ease, no contrast of colour revealing them to the eye of their victims. They hunted hares and rabbits in the same way that the small species of owls hunt mice,—that is, they pounced upon them, and, when possible, swallowed them whole.

One of these owls, having been wounded by a shot in the island of Balta, disgorged a young rabbit; another, at the moment of his capture, contained in his stomach a bird still covered with all its feathers.

Sir Edward Parry, who passed several months in the land of the snowy owl, frequently met with these birds lying dead, and he concluded they had perished for want of food.

The greediness with which the snowy owls contend with the hunter for his booty, or carry away, before his eyes, the products of the chase, may be adduced in support of the opinion of many naturalists that they sometimes suffer cruelly from hunger.

Other travellers, who have visited the regions of the North, assure us also that the owls mount guard on some tall tree or precipitous rock, and that whenever any game is shot, they pounce upon it with lightning-like rapidity, and carry it off before the hunter has had time to take possession of it.

The manners of the common owl are different: he

prowls around the habitations of man; he frequents our barns and granaries. At the approach of twilight he leaves his lair, and beats the fields and plains and hedges with the scrupulous exactness of a pointer. And ever and anon he pounces, with rapid flight and unerring accuracy of eye, upon his prey, which he seizes and devours almost simultaneously. He does not even take the trouble to tear it to pieces with his claws.

Having satisfied his appetite, he bethinks himself of possible days of want and scarcity, and carries into his nest the little animals he has captured.

And yet the thing is not so easy as it appears.

Whether his victim be a mouse or a bird, he holds it in his talons, and, therefore, it is evident he cannot make use of his feet to perch himself. Before descending right upon the ground, he must consequently place himself, at first, on the most projecting part of a roof, and there transfer his burden from his claws to his bill. This operation is really delicate, and the prey, if alive, often effects its escape.

There is another kind of owl differing greatly from our common owl in his habits, and in his mode of constructing his nest; for he excavates absolutely genuine burrows as a place of concealment. His scientific name is *Strix cucularia*.

Widely distributed over the American continent, both north and south, he owes his name to his curious kind of domicile.

While other birds of this numerous family seek retired quarters in woods, and forests, and ruined edifices, he, on the contrary, haunts the open plains, and lives in company

with certain animals. Instead of hunting during the night or at early morning, and retiring afterwards into his lair, he loves the light of the noonday sun, flies about rapidly in open day, and only regains at nightfall his subterranean dwelling-place; a burrow exactly resembling that of the marmot or prairie-dog.



THE BURROWING OWL.

He habitually frequents the neighbourhood of these burrows, flies off to some short distance if alarmed, and when he is satisfied that no danger threatens him, reoccupies his post. In case of any serious peril, he takes refuge at the bottom of his burrow, whence it is very difficult to dislodge him.

Captain Sir Francis Head, while traversing those immense plains of South America called the Pampas, fell into the midst of a band of these birds, living in close society with the biscachos, a kind of rodent akin to the chinchilla.

Towards evening, he says, the biscachos post themselves outside their burrows, with a serious aspect, worthy of the gravest and most meditative philosophers.

During the day, the entrance to their burrows is guarded by two owls, who never abandon their position. While their friends are hastening across the plain, they continue the faithful discharge of their duty, and wag, one after another, their venerable heads in a fashion that is almost ridiculous by dint of its very solemnity. But if any horsemen pass in the immediate neighbourhood of the two sentinels, they temporarily throw off their dignity, and precipitate themselves into the burrows of the biscachos.





CHAPTER XII.

FOREIGN BIRDS.

EXOTIC BIRDS—A CAPITAL WHISTLER—THE BIRD OF PARADISE—HIS ARRIVAL IN PARIS—HIS NATIVE HABITAT—DESCRIPTION OF THE METHOD OF CAPTURING HIM—HIS FOOD, WHEN AT LIBERTY—LEGENDS RELATING TO THE BIRD OF PARADISE—HOW, FOR A LONG TIME, THE FEMALE WAS SUPPOSED TO LAY HER EGGS AND INCUBATE—FIGAFETTA'S ROMANCE—SOMETHING MORE ABOUT BIRDS OF PARADISE.



WENT, this morning, to pay a visit to a captain in the merchant service, who returned home a few days ago from the Molucca Islands, to rest at Paris with his family, after an absence of upwards of three years.

On entering his drawing-room, and while I was shaking him by the hand, I heard a thrush piping with great perfection the favourite melody composed by Queen Hortense—*Partant pour la Syrie*. I looked about for the singer

whose strident voice emitted sounds of such remarkable accuracy; but, instead of a thrush, I discovered, in one of those elegant cages which the Parisian artist manufactures with so much skill and taste, the most magnificent bird I had ever seen alive. Of about the size of a magpie, feathers of a resplendent yellow and of shifting and living gleams, like the reflections of burnished gold, adorned his head, and melted harmoniously into the emerald tones which surrounded his dainty little beak; finally, from either side of his body projected long shafts of light undulating plumes, which issued from under each wing.

Perched on his tiny black feet, he coquettishly inclined his pretty head while singing, and his large yellow eye assumed an expression of pride when he heard my exclamation of surprise and admiration.

"What!" said I to the captain, "is this then really an emerald Bird of Paradise—a true *Paradisea apoda*, as ornithologists call it?"

"You see for yourself, my dear friend, that he does not deserve the epithet of *apoda*, or 'without feet,' which the old naturalists bestowed upon him!"

While the captain was speaking, I kept my gaze fixed on this beautiful bird, the second of his kind which had been brought to Europe alive. In 1862, the Royal Zoological Society at London owned three specimens. Friendly as the thrushes of Europe, to whose family he seems to belong, he played merrily, through the bars of his cage, with the finger of his master, who teased and tickled him.

"Come, Coco, come," said the captain, "let us look at you a little more closely."

And opening the door of his cage, he stretched out his hand, on which the bird made haste to perch himself. Then he overwhelmed his master with caresses, displayed his beautiful plumage, just as a peacock expands his tail, and began to whistle another melody with an undefinably strange and simple grace.

"Coco is singing one of the songs of the natives of New Guinea, his compatriots," resumed the captain. "I must not hide from you the fact that it is for your benefit he lavishes all these pretty airs and charming tendernesses. Make haste to profit by them, for I hear the children coming, after which the bird will care for nobody else. He loves them with quite a passionate love, though he has known them but a few days."

As he spoke, two attractive little twin-sisters, between six and seven years old, noisily entered the drawing-room. Coco immediately sprang from his master's shoulder, hastened to join the children, played with their tresses, and set to work to gain his share of the cakes which they held in their hands.

"You must have found it very difficult," I said to the captain, "to bring home this precious bird alive?"

"Indeed, no," he answered; "but I had no easy task to catch him, and I think that, but for an accident, I should never have obtained possession of a *living* bird of paradise. But once in my possession, I brought him up as easily as you might do a simple thrush. One evening, when I was wandering in a forest in New Guinea, the wind suddenly rose with great violence, and a young bird of paradise, one of a troop of ten or a dozen of his species, could not contend against the hurricane; his long feathers,

entangled and ruffled, prevented him from flying, and he fell at my feet, uttering a cry of distress.

"Well was it for him that he was unable to go any further with his companions; for the native hunters, knowing that the storm would be sure to bring down a large number of birds of paradise, were lying in wait, and pounced upon the others, and, while I was carrying home yonder bird, began to torture the poor creatures, whose agonizing cries I fancy I can still hear.

"Only fancy: without killing them first, they pluck out their entrails, and pass a red-hot iron into their body. You know how tenacious the thrush is of life, and will understand what these poor creatures must have suffered during an agony of fully fifteen minutes. Afterwards, with a sharp-pointed reed, the natives remove the bones of the skull and skeleton, cut off the feet, and inclose the still fresh skin in a kind of sheath made out of a bit of bamboo. In this sheath they not only preserve their brilliancy, but also shrink up, grow compact, and undergo a kind of *felting*.

"See now at what a cost, when fashion demands it, our young ladies deck themselves with the plumes of the bird of paradise!

"I don't know whether Coco understood the extent of the danger from which I had rescued him; but it is a fact that he never for one moment exhibited any fierceness. Gradually recovering from his terror, he scarcely found himself settled in my abode before he began to pick off the wall such flies, gnats, ants, and other insects, as came within his reach.

"But such occasional repasts did not make him less

partial to berries, fruits, and seeds; and, during the voyage home, he made himself very comfortable, at need, with bits of biscuit soaked in milk, or even in water.

"It is impossible to provide sailors with any source of amusement more agreeable to them than the presence of a living animal on board ship. They saluted the arrival of my bird of paradise with hurrahs of satisfaction, petted and caressed him constantly, and immediately commenced his education.

"And, first, they unanimously gave him the name of *Coco*, which to *you*, I daresay, appears a little vulgar; but the bird adopted it and replied to it at once. Afterwards they whistled to him all kinds of airs, which he remembered and repeated with marvellous facility; lastly, they resolved upon initiating him in nautical language, and *Coco* was already beginning to use strong phrases, when I interposed my authority, and declared that if I caught my bird stammering out any coarse or jovial word, he would thenceforth be confined to my cabin.

"This threat sufficed; and if *Coco* should take it into his head to speak, rest assured that you may not fear, in *his* society, the irreverent utterances of the parrot *Vert-Vert*." *

So, said I to myself, as I left the captain's drawing-room—so I have just seen one of those birds which for centuries were the theme of the most marvellous and poetical legends in the world. And this bird is called *Coco*, and whistles and prattles like a young thrush brought up by the cobbler round the corner!

Yet, when Magelhaen's lieutenant, Pigafetta, brought

* Alluding to a well-known fairy tale.

**THE SAILORS' PET.**

back to Spain, and presented to Charles V., the skin of a

bird of paradise, he told the Emperor that this bird was a fugitive from heaven. He added that having, like the degraded angels of old, infringed the divine command which forbade him to cross the barriers of the terrestrial Paradise, this bird had fallen upon earth, where, for lack of ambrosia as his sustenance, he had perished of regret and hunger, surrounded by his fellows, not less guilty than himself of having transgressed the celestial laws. He had flown so long as he had strength; for he possessed no feet, and could not therefore obtain any relief or repose by perching upon branch or bough.

A Jesuit, Father Nieremberg, at first confirmed the fantastic inventions of Pigafetta; but being shortly afterwards sent on a mission to the Moluccas, he found that he had been greatly misled, and had assisted to propagate a gross falsehood. He was desirous, therefore, of setting forth the truth; and he wrote that the birds of paradise, far from issuing out of the celestial Eden, belonged, with the exception of their beauty, to the ordinary species of birds; that like *them* they built their nests, and like *them* laid their eggs; that they incubated like *them*, and like *them* lived upon birds, seeds, and insects. The wise men of the age replied that, far from allowing him to utter such a recantation, they could not understand how a monk could descend to the circulation of obvious falsehoods. For had they not ocular demonstration, and was it not asserted by a hundred witnesses, that birds of paradise fed upon dew, or sometimes on the honied juices of flowers, and that, being without feet, they never touched the earth?

The bitterest of Father Nieremberg's antagonists — a

certain individual named Acosta—declared that, “without feet, deprived of the faculty of perching and resting on the ground, birds of paradise suspended themselves from the trees by their long tail-feathers or filaments, that their sole element was the air, and that in this element they slept, and laid eggs, and incubated. The male bird, he added, had a hollow in his back in which the female deposited her eggs; the latter hatched them by means of another cavity in her abdomen corresponding to that of the male; the two birds entwined themselves together with their long plumes, and in this way formed a living nest until the eggs were hatched! The little ones emerged, completely formed and feathered; took to flight immediately on issuing from the shell; directed their course under the guidance and protection of their parents; and lived in the air as they did.”

Two centuries passed by before men recognized the veracity of Father Nieremberg, and the true history of the bird of paradise supplanted the romance so firmly accredited by Acosta.

Few persons are ignorant, nowadays, that these birds do not repair for four months a year to the terrestrial paradise, but that, on the contrary, they migrate from New Guinea into the neighbouring islands, where they find an abundance of the spices, insects, and even of the tiny fledglings they most affect. In the deepest recesses of the forests they construct their nests—nests, solid, and even somewhat coarse; and made of twigs, moss, and dry branches. At the epoch of their amours these birds are very quarrelsome. Wild with jealousy, they throw them-

selves upon one another, fighting hotly, and often to the death, as is proved by the number of bleeding carcasses found in early spring at the foot of the trees, and eagerly sought after by the hunters. For though their feathers may be broken and bedraggled, their flesh is excellent; and you can conceive of nothing daintier, says Coco's master, than a bird of paradise roasted to a turn!

Alas! with respect to how many things and wonders of the past have we been compelled to accept a commonplace and dis-illusionizing realism! What would the poet of the seventeenth century, Domingo Ribeira, say, if he had known the truth about the bird celebrated in the following impassioned love-song?—



A SPANISH TROUBADOUR.

DOMINGO RIBEIRA'S SONG.

Bird of paradise, bird of paradise,
My love for Dolores is like unto thee!

Like thee, it never descends to earth,
Nor fed upon earthly food can be.

DOMINGO RIBEIRA'S SONG.

Like thee, it comes from the Eden-world,—
And, like a heaven-sent angel, see.
Hath found a home in the heart of me !

In the sun it shines with gold, like thee,
With gold and emeralds shines in the sun ;
But more divine my sun than thine,
For mine shall the glance of Dolores be !

Poor poet ! the bird to which you liken your chivalrous Castilian love does *not* proceed from heaven, and *does* feed upon vulgar food. Sailors have dropped his poetical name of bird of paradise, to replace it by the vulgar sobriquet of Coco ; and, finally, he furnishes an excellent dish for the gourmands of New Guinea !





CHAPTER XIII.

MORE ABOUT STRANGERS.

A WALK IN THE MUSEUM—CAGED BIRDS—THE WREN—A LEGEND OF GREAT INTEREST—THE PARROQUET—HUMMING-BIRDS—A COLLECTION OF BIRDS OF PARADISE.



N taking my leave of the captain, I directed my steps towards the Museum, in order to examine the collection of birds of paradise enshrined in its galleries. As I proceeded on my way, and crossed the garden, I fluttered (so to speak) from compartment to compartment, watching with curiosity the rare birds they contained.

And, first, I remarked the eagles *à queue étagée*, the katapa-owls, a Javanese marabout, a leucocephalous stork, and some Cochin China fighting-cocks.

These latter birds, tall in stature and proud of mien,

carefully selected from among the special products of a race trained for combat during a hundred generations, are justly regarded as formidable adversaries, even for the celebrated Devonshire cocks. The English, who were at one time great amateurs of the cruel but attractive (?) spectacle, imported them at a great expense from their native country.

When we visit the Museum, we must not exclusively occupy ourselves, however, with the animals shut up in the dens and cages. Those living freely and in security among the trees, and in the midst of the groves and thickets of that immense garden, are far more worthy of our attention. As, for example, the swallow, the martin, and the audacious sparrow, which lives there perfectly at home, and does not hesitate to seek between the very talons of the tiger, and under the very beak of vulture and eagle, the crumb of bread which he covets: there are the nightingale, the warbler, the titmouse, and a hundred others, which build their nests, and lay their eggs, and hatch them, without any person ever thinking of disturbing them.

Let us not forget the wren, which flutters incessantly from tree to tree, and branch to branch, and suspends herself from the limber boughs in order to entrap the whirling insect-prey. Search carefully among the pines and firs, and you will discover her nest—completely spherical in form, constructed of moss, and clothed externally with spiders' webs, artistically spread out, and designed to preserve the graceful little domicile from dampness. It is lined internally with a soft pliant tissue composed of the down of swans and marabouts, collected hither and thither, bit

by bit, on the edge of the water. Always suspended to the extremity of a green bough, this nest has a side opening; for the little ones, which issue from the rose-tinted eggs it contains, are frail and feeble, and a drop of water falling upon their body would prove enough to kill them. So you will see the parents incessantly watching over their beloved and delicate progeny: the male ever vigilant, with his dainty head of golden yellow encircled by a belt or rather a diadem of black feathers; the female, like a noble materfamilias, renounces for the sake of her children every kind of coquetry, wears a modest and ashen-coloured livery, and apparently remains always at home.

The French call this bird the *roitelet*; in some parts of England he is known as king wren; and in Latin, the ornithologists designate him *regulus*. Does he owe his royal title to his golden belt, which resembles a diadem; or to a legend which is ever so many centuries old?

"One day," says this legend, "the birds assembled to choose a king, and decided that the sovereignty should belong to the one among them who rose to the greatest elevation in the air, and who, consequently, should approach nearest to the sun, the great father of Nature.

"Hardly had this programme been decided upon before the eagle opened wide his wings, rose majestically and far out of sight into the upper atmosphere, until to the millions of birds which had assembled to elect a king, nothing was visible but a speck against the blue. After which, he dropped slowly to the earth, and demanded of the stupid electors:—

"'Am I your king?'

"'Yes! yes! Long live the eagle! Long live our king!' was the enthusiastic response from every quarter.

"'A moment! a moment!' cried a little, frail, shrill voice; 'a moment! You have sworn to give the crown to whomsoever should soar highest in the air, and I, *I* rose far higher than the eagle; for, lurking among the thick plumage of his back, as still you see me, he has carried me, all unknowingly, along with him, and I have always been above him.'

"Taking the decree literally, there could be no doubt the little bird was justified, and the electors found themselves greatly embarrassed. The claimant was strictly in the right; but, on the other hand, what bird was willing to own as sovereign such a pigmy, as harebrained as he was feeble! After awhile, an old owl, who enjoyed a great reputation for sagacity, scratched his gray head with his claw, and proposed an accommodation which might reconcile both the spirit and the letter of the edict sanctioned by the congress.

"'The eagle shall be king,' said he; 'because he alone, and of his own strength, attained to an elevation whither not one of us would have dared to follow him. Therefore, let us proclaim him our sovereign. As for the bird who, but for the eagle, could never have reached the empyrean heights, let him receive the title of "little king," or "regulus."'

"The owl's proposal met with general applause. The eagle took possession of the sovereign power, and the wren accepted, laughingly, the title offered to him.

"'Though,' said he, 'I do not care for your crown and its anxieties—though I greatly prefer my crumb and my

freedom to the gilded fatigues of power—you have done wrong in preferring the eagle to govern you. Undoubtedly he is stronger than I; but I am more intelligent than he, since I tricked him without his even suspecting it! Now is not intelligence better adapted than strength for the government of a state? ”

I am reminded by this legend of other marvellous narratives contained in the time-old books.

For example: in the early part of the eighth century Saint Guthlac reared a couple of crows in his solitary retreat at Croyland. And, adds the saint's biographer, not only were these birds subject to him, but also all the fish and quadrupeds received daily from his hand the food appropriate for them.

One day a monk paid a visit to Saint Guthlac, and while they were discoursing upon the spiritual life, two swallows winged their way towards them, singing joyously: they fearlessly planted themselves on the shoulders of the holy man, whence they descended upon his arms and knees.

A few years later, Saint Cuthbert tamed the crows of his desolate island of Farne, by the gentleness with which he treated them and their little ones. Later still, and in the same island, Saint Bartholomew so completely domesticated a little bird, that, for years, he went daily to perch on his table and eat from his hand.

The first Saint Bridget—an Irish saint—taught the birds living in the vicinity of her hermitage to present themselves whenever she summoned them.

*A SAINT AND HIS FRIENDS.*

Another Irish saint, Saint Colmon, tamed thirteen teal, which escorted him up and down the lake belonging to his monastic retreat.

At this moment the cry of a parrot, and a hand placed upon my shoulder, drew me out of my reverie: I turned round to receive the greeting of an old friend, who had travelled over all the countries of the world.

"Ah, I have caught you!" he exclaimed; "you are here in ecstasies before one of my parrots; this bird, though perhaps you do not know it, is one of the exotic birds longest known in Europe.

"Indeed, in the Middle Ages there were frequently to be found in the castles and manor-houses of nobles, two birds of extraordinary value. The more favoured was the parrot.

"From pictures and drawings which have come down even to our own days, the parrot seems to have been known to the Anglo-Saxons by the name of *ragofine*, a word whose last syllable simply means 'finch'; the two first syllables, whose etymology is not very certain, are found, perhaps, in the word *hrage*, or 'goat.' It is not very easy, at first, to see why the parrot should have received the name of *goat-finch*; but Turner Smith, a little-known savant of the eighteenth century, explains it by the leaps and bounds in which the poor captive bird indulges when fastened by the leg to a perch. In France he received the name of *papegaut*.

"Alexandre Denis, one of our ancient troubadours, calls the parroquet the 'jongleur and minstrel of the birds;' not on account of the beauty of his song, but of his mimetic talent and playful tricks. He speaks, too, of his wicked ways, and his facility in imitating the human voice; adding that he is both more intelligent and more amusing than the jongleurs themselves.

"Such brilliant qualities naturally invested these birds with an aureole of superstition: it was believed that besides the idiom which the birds use as a means of mutual communication—the source, as everybody knows, of a crowd of fables and legends—the parrots also understand the language of man.

"‘A Norman knight,’ says Denis, ‘possessed a parrot which he passionately loved, but was compelled to abandon, as he had assumed the cross, and was going to war in the Holy Land against the infidels. While passing through Syria, he came into the neighbourhood of Mount Gilboa, in Samaria, which was supposed to be the native habitat of the *papegauts*, and here he met with one so exactly like his own, that he said to him jestingly: ‘My parrot, who is shut up in a cage, and resembles you, salutes you.’”

"‘He had scarcely uttered these words when, to his great amazement, the bird fell to the ground as if he were dead.

"‘On his return to Normandy, the knight related this adventure to his friends, while standing near the cage of his own parrot; and the bird fell immediately, deprived of all sensation, from his lofty perch. The knight, in his alarm, removed him from his cage and endeavoured to revive him; but the bird was no sooner on the ground than he recovered himself, took to flight, and returned no more.’

"The magpie was as much sought after in medieval times, among all classes of society, as he is nowadays. He was found under the thatched roof of the serf as well as

within the 'marble halls' of the seigneur. More than one ancient legend is founded on the intelligence and subtlety attributed to this bird, as well as on his pretended faculty of imitating the human voice.

"It appears, according to Alexander Needham, that a magpie which generally inhabited the poultry-yard of a manorial mansion, was regarded as the protector of its inhabitants, on account of the vigilance and noise with which he did not fail to make known the approach of any depredator. It was believed that the parrot, in the interior of the household, was equally useful in warning men against the attacks of robbers."

While thus discoursing, we arrived at the Ornithological Gallery, and as I was directing my steps towards the glass cabinets containing the birds of paradise,—

"One moment," said my companion; "before going any further, pay your homage as an amateur to the humming-birds."

The Humming-birds and Colibris, which vary in size from the vigorous proportions of the swallow to the diminutiveness of the cockchafer, are found only on the American continent. But in this vast range we meet them both north and south, and under the most varied conditions. Sometimes they haunt the plains and valleys; sometimes they live on the banks of rivers, on the edge of the sea, on the loftiest mountains, at an elevation of from 12,000 to 16,000 feet; they seem equally at home under a tropical sky, among the glaciers, or the eternal snows.

Their habits and manners are nearly everywhere the same. Constantly on the wing, from the first blush of

dawn to the early glimmer of twilight, they fly from flower to flower, collecting from the calyx, by means of their long beak and bifurcated tongue, a little pollen, or a few larvæ and insects, and quenching their thirst with drops of dew.

The humming-bird's flight reminds us, in the feverish movement of his wings and the incessant hum accompanying it, of the large butterfly called the *sphinx*. As he issues from his nest or retreat only before the dawn of day or at nightfall, all the descriptions given by travellers of this living sapphire which gleams and glitters in the sunlight seem to me somewhat imaginary.

In truth, we must make the melancholy avowal that the marvellous colours of the humming-bird can be admired only in a collection. When the bird, alive and free, flutters from plant to plant, it is impossible to perceive anything but a vague, sombre, indistinct mass, whose presence we recognize by our ears rather than by our eyes.

Such is not the case, however, if we contrive to observe her by day, either in a forest, or even in the vicinity of habitations: this spectacle, moreover, is much less difficult to procure than one would suppose, for the humming-bird, if you make no attempt to seize her, is by no means timid, and will allow you to approach her very nearly.

At our ease we may then contemplate her, sitting on her eggs, in a nest about as big as the thumb of a glove, constructed of interwoven bits of grass and gray lichen, forming a kind of felted tissue, glued together with the saliva of both the male and female birds, and lined with soft cottony down collected from the plants in the neighbourhood. The plumage of the female, nearly always of

a dull gray colour, reminds us of the garb of our common sparrow; the male, on the contrary, to whatever species he belongs, glitters with the dazzling hues of the sapphire, the emerald, and the most brilliant gems. The better to illuminate and display this magnificent adornment, he expands his chest, pirouettes on a single wing, turns and whirls about his mate, uttering a kind of tiny passionate cry, repeated at intervals. The one on whom he lavishes all these seductive graces contemplates him in silent admiration: perched, almost always, on the spray of a bush, she seems thoroughly fascinated, and with a slow movement of the head follows the splendid lover who seeks to obtain her confession that she is not indifferent to him.

Soon, therefore, with a common consent, they address themselves to the task of constructing a nest; in which, a



THE HUMMING-BIRD.

few days afterwards, are deposited two or three eggs of a dead white colour, not one of which surpasses in size "a grain of mustard seed." The female begins to hatch them with passionate solicitude, and the male himself no longer gives a thought to the livery of which he was but lately so boastful and so proud. He remains on the brink of the nest, until it is time for him to think of supplying the wants of his mate : then he preens his feathers, darts away, and quickly returns with his beak full of insects, which he supplies to his female, softly fluttering his wings to fan and refresh her.

When the little ones are hatched, the two birds watch over them with a courage and an anxiety fully needed ; for the enemies of the humming-birds are numerous, dangerous, and formidable through their strength and skill.

The blue bird, the martin, and the tyrant fly-catcher, are very partial to the new-born, and seek to surprise them during the male bird's absence. If they are successful in deceiving the latter's vigilance, they throw themselves on the nest, drive away the female, who is too weak to defend herself, and devour, like feathered ogres, the poor little Tom Thumbs ! But woe to them if the male should suddenly return ! At the sight of the brigand, without calculating the possibilities of peril, or his adversary's strength, he darts upon him, struggles to fasten on his back, and, if he succeeds, quickly put his enemy *hors de combat*. From the impregnable position he has taken up, he deals him heavy blows with his slender sharp-edged beak, and generally digs out his eyes. Then the conquered yields, dragging down the conqueror in his fall, and too often crushing under his heavy body the little hero,

who is unable to disentangle his claws from the feathers in which he had entwined them. Hence it frequently happens that the carcasses of the two combatants are found lying upon the sand together.

Dr. Hebert Frantz, one of those patient Germans who do not hesitate to devote entire years to the study of the habits of a single species of animal, relates that he saw, in Brazil, an encounter between the large spider known as the *mygalis avicularis*, or bird-catching spider, and the ruby humming-bird.

"The mygalè," says Frantz, "is as large as the palm of the hand of a young maiden; she lives at the bottom of a burrow which she excavates in the earth, and which she closes hermetically by means of a door made of a glutinous substance, and literally bolted. She opens it only at nightfall. Then she steals out of her cavern, slowly, treacherously, without the slightest noise, and climbs, by the help of her sharp nails, to the branches where hang suspended the humming-birds' nests.

"One day, a monster of this species contrived, in the mode I have described, to reach a nest of the ruby humming-bird when the male was absent. With a stroke of its legs, the monstrous spider felled the female, seized her in its mandibles, and severed the head of the poor little creature, who uttered but one cry before dying.

"This cry of distress, however, was heard by the male, who was engaged in the neighbourhood, looking out for booty. Wild with rage and despair, he flew as fast as his wings would carry him to swoop down upon the mygalè, which sheltered its large body under the fork of a branch,

and faced the disconsolate *widower*, resolved on avenging his companion's death. The combat lasted more than fifteen minutes; the spider's feet and claws were full of the ruby bird's feathers, while he, all bleeding and wounded as he was, returned every moment to the charge with a fury worthy of a better fate. At last he succumbed. Then the hideous mygale issued, with a thousand careful precautions, from underneath the branch which sheltered him, seized the carcasses of his two victims, and carried them slowly into his cave."

The humming-bird will not live in captivity. As is often the case with our butterflies, he enters our apartments, and prowls among the flowers, without troubling himself about the persons looking at him; and, provided no attempt is made to catch him, he will, in time, grow sufficiently familiar to take bits of sugar from the lips of the young ladies, who are greatly interested by this proof of confidence and intimacy.

But confine him to a cage, he soon dies; and it is difficult to cite even one or two instances of colibris and humming-birds which have endured captivity for a month. Only once in Europe, at Lady Hamond's, in London, have any humming-birds been seen alive in confinement; these were fed upon honey, but quickly died of nostalgia.

There are hundreds of different species of these fascinating birds.

To know them well, and study them thoroughly, like an ornithologist, we must see them placed side by side,—not only the male, the female, the eggs, the skeleton, the

nest,—but also specimens of the bird in various stages of its growth.

At these various stages, his garb is so greatly modified, that it is not uncommon for the most experienced ornithologist to name and describe, as belonging to distinct species, individuals sprung, so to speak, from the same nest but at different epochs, and whose widely differing plumage justifies, to some degree, these errors of classification.

There exists but one means of demonstrating the brotherhood of birds completely dissimilar in colours,—that is, by closely comparing them with one another. You can then ascertain through what numerous and



GATHERING SUPPLIES.

absolute transformations of tint the new-born passes, in his infancy, his youth, and his adolescence, before he attains his full growth. One who, on his first appearance, shows himself of a dull white, becomes gray, then mixes white and gray, passes on to brown, and finally clothes himself in dazzling colours, whose splendour time does but increase. An-

other, on the contrary,—and this often happens to birds of prey,—goes through eight or ten metamorphoses, and, attired at first in a gay bright garb, which gradually dims, he finally assumes an austere and lugubrious plumage.

We can therefore follow, one by one, and from stage to stage, the series of these singular modifications, the causes of so many scientific errors, and can account for them, without hesitation, and without any possible doubt. We can even *touch them with our finger*,—morally, be it understood; for, materially, you cannot touch, however lightly, these delicate creatures, without running the risk of endangering and tarnishing their beauty!

After having paid a just tribute of admiration to the humming-birds, we arrived at length before the collection of Birds of Paradise, and admired the magnificence of their different species.

According to Cuvier, the true Birds of Paradise form several groups.

These are :—

The species whose side-feathers are slender, and elongated into plumes longer than the body, with two barbed filaments adhering to the rump, and prolonged like the side-feathers.

This group, which Vieillot includes, under the name of *Samalia*, in a division of the family of the Manucaudiates, comprises the species first known in Europe, the commonest of all, and the one whose customs we know most thoroughly.

It is the *Emerald Bird of Paradise* (*Paradisea apoda*) of Linné, which the Portuguese call *passaros de sol* (the

sun-bird); the inhabitants of Ternate, *manuco Dewata* (the bird of God), or *hurong papeia* (the Papuan bird), and which at Amboyna and Sumatra is known as the *manukey-Aron*.

His size is that of a thrush; the upper part of his head and neck is of a bright yellow, and the curve of the neck and throat of a radiant emerald green.

It is from the male of this species Fashion borrows the long sheaves of yellowish plumes which he wears upon his sides, to compose the feathery crests worn as an ornament of a lady's head-gear. Vieillot, in his *Galerie des Oiseaux*, expresses himself as follows, on the subject of this bird of paradise :—

“ This species remains in the islands of Aron during the dry or western monsoon, and returns to New Guinea at the beginning of the rainy or eastern monsoon. They travel in troops of thirty to forty individuals, under the guidance of another bird which invariably flies *above* the band. This chief, says Valentin, in ‘Forster’s Voyage,’ is black, and spotted with red; but up to the present time no one appears to have had an opportunity of examining him. Birds of paradise never separate from him, whether they fly, or whether they take their rest; but this attachment to their guide is sometimes to their injury, when he stoops to rest upon the ground; because they are not able to rise again very easily, on account of the form and peculiar arrangement of their plumes.

“They perch themselves upon the taller trees, particularly on the waringa (*ficus Benjamina*), with its small leaves and red fruit, on which they feed themselves.

"The extent, the quantity, the length, the suppleness of their hypocondrial plumes, enable them to rise to a great height, assist them to maintain themselves in the air, and to cleave it with the lightness and swiftness of the swallow of Ternate; but if the wind grow contrary, their luxuriance of plumage is an obstacle to the direction of their flight, and, accordingly, they can avoid the danger only by rising perpendicularly into a more favourable region of the air, where they continue their course.

"Though they always fly *against* the wind, and avoid stormy weather, they are sometimes surprised by a hurricane. It is in such a case that they incur the greatest dangers. Their long and flexible feathers entangle in one another; the bird can no longer fly; his repeated cries announce his distress; in vain he struggles against the storm; his embarrassment increases; terror redoubles the powerlessness of his efforts; he stumbles, and falls. The Indians, drawn to the spot by his cries, seize or kill him, or he escapes death simply by gaining an elevation whence he can resume his flight.

"The female has the two intermediary pinions of the tail shorter than those of the male."

The *Red Bird of Paradise* (*Paradisea rubra*) likewise belongs to the first section determined by Cuvier.

This second species, which some ornithologists believe to be identical with that of which I have just spoken, is specially characterized by the red colour of the clustering plumes which adorn its sides, and by the very large filaments of the tail, which are concave on one side.

Moreover, a velvety black surrounds the base of the

beak, and the feathers of the sinciput, which are sufficiently elongated to resemble a little nest; the feathers underneath the neck and on the back, rump, sides of the throat and chest, are of a yellow tint.

It is not accurately known in what part of Hindustan this bird lives.

In the second species, the side-feathers are not longer than the tail.

One of the most beautiful of the birds of paradise is the *Manucaude royal* (*Cyanurus regius*).

The top of the head is of a rich velvety orange colour; the neck and throat are of a reddish, brilliant, satiny brown, but deeper on the throat, at the bottom of which occurs a transversal whitish ray, followed by a broad band of emerald green with metallic reflections.

Broad feathers, gray at their base, and throughout the greater part of their length, traversed afterwards by a couple of lines, one white, the other of a fine red, and all terminated by a tint of gilded green, occupy the *hypocnra*, the back, and the upper rectrices. The wing-



THE KING BIRD OF PARADISE.

pens are of a velvety red; the rectrices are of the same tint.

The two broad filaments which take the place of two intermediary feathers of the tail, and whose extremity is garnished with tolerably long barbs, coil round upon one another in such a manner as to form a hollow ring or circle, and at this particular point are illuminated by emerald green with gilded reflections.

The *King Bird of Paradise*, which is found at Sopelo-o, one of the Aron islands, and particularly at Void-Sir, during the western monsoon, is by disposition solitary. He never perches in the lofty trees, but flies from bush to bush, and feeds upon red berries.

The islanders ensnare them in cleverly made nooses, and with a glue extracted from the bread-fruit.

It seems that this bird breeds in New Guinea, and that it is only as a bird of passage he appears in the Aron islands.

The *Paradisea Rubra* is distinguished by the colour of the plumage, a scarlet red, which covers the upper parts of the body; they change to green at their lower extremity and on the sides. A bundle of straw-yellow feathers ornaments the sides of the neck; and another bundle of the same colour, but more intense, is placed opposite the fold of the wing.

Vieillot places the red bird of paradise in the division of the Samalias, and makes the *Manucaudes* the type of a particular division.

The species which possess their feathers tapering, but

short, on the flanks, and which have no filaments adjacent to the rump, are named *Parotia*.

The single species composing this section is the *Parotia aurea*; its name indicates the golden filaments, three in number, which slightly project on either side of the head.



THE GOLDEN-BREADED BIRD OF PARADISE.

These filaments are terminated by moderately long bands, spread out like the feather of a quill.

The top of the head is adorned with a kind of crest, formed by feathers springing from the base of the bill, and so mingled with white and black that the aggregate of these colours presents a pearly gray shade. Black plumes

with disunited barbs spring from either side of the belly; those of the throat, narrow at their origin, broad at their extremity, are of a fine velvety black in the middle, and of the colour of gold changing into violet on the sides, with reflections of various green shades.

Behind the head you will observe a kind of collar like the feathers of the throat; the tail resembles a piece of black velvet of admirable richness and softness.



THE SUPERB BIRD OF PARADISE.

Several long barbs, separated, and floating, ornament his pens.

He is a native of New Guinea.

The fourth species possess neither filaments nor any prolongation of the side-feathers. Vieillot composed of it his division of *Lophorines*.

Cuvier admits only two species into this group.

The *Lophorina superba*, which the natives call *Shay-wa*. The islanders of Ternate and Tidore traffic largely with it, and designate it *Suffo-o-kokotoo* (black bird of paradise).

This species has a very curious appearance, owing to the direction taken by some of his feathers.

Those of the under portion of the throat, of a bronzed green, with violet reflections, spread over the breast, and imitate, as they part on either side of the belly, of which they leave the middle exposed, a swallow's tail.

The back, the crupper, the wings, the caudal rectrices and the tectrices are marked by the same tints.

Long velvety plumes seem to issue from the shoulders, rise sometimes to a very considerable height, sometimes gather more or less upon the back, and lean forward to form a kind of cloak or mantle, which extends nearly to the tip of the wings.

Those visible on the upper part of the beak have all the appearance of two tiny black tufts.

The inhabitants of New Guinea export to Salawar these birds of paradise in hollow bamboos, after having smoke-dried them, and removed their entrails, wings, tail, and feet.

The second species admitted by Cuvier is the *Paradisea aurea*, which Gmelin placed among the lories, under the name of *Oriolus galbula*.

This bird does not offer any extraordinary development of plumage, and can only be recognized by the velvetiness of his feathers.

The garb of the male is generally a very lively orange; black is found only on the throat and on the first remiges.

In the female, brown replaces orange.

Latham and Gmelin confounded among birds of paradise a bird which Cuvier classifies under the genus *Merulidæ*—namely, the Incomparable Bird of Paradise, or the Paradise Magpie (*Astrapia nigra*), distinguished by the remarkable

elongation of its tail. Other and later ornithologists have restored this bird to the birds of paradise, erecting it into a genus under the name of *Astrapia*.

BIRDS OF PARADISE: PRINCIPAL SPECIES.

- The emerald bird of paradise.....*Paradisea apoda*.
 The golden-breasted bird of paradise....*Parotia aurea*.
 The incomparable bird of paradise.....*Astrapia nigra*.
 The king bird of paradise.....*Cisinnurus regius*.
 The little emerald bird of paradise.....*Paradisea papuensis*.
 The red bird of paradise.....*Paradisea rubra*.
 The magnificent bird of paradise.....*Diphyllodes magnifica*.
 The superb bird of paradise.....*Lophorhina superba*.





CHAPTER XIV.

FRENCH BIRDS.

ON CERTAIN FRENCH BIRDS—DIURNAL AND NOCTURNAL BIRDS OF PREY—
THE DENTIROSTRAL PASSERES—THE CONIROSTRES—THE LAKE—ITS
PANEGYRIC, BY THE FRENCH NATURALIST VIEILLOT—BONJEAN ON THE
DESTRUCTION OF BIRDS.



OUR French author asserts that nowhere in France, not even in the Museum at Paris, does there exist a complete and special collection of French birds. I shall here attempt as complete an enumeration as possible of these birds, which, in the main, are also British birds; confining myself,

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however, to those which have some distinctive peculiarity, and which it would be interesting to see in our galleries, planted side by side.

At the head we naturally place the diurnal *Birds of Prey* :—

The vulture	<i>Vultur cinereus.</i>
The tawny vulture	<i>Vultur fulvus.</i>
The white percnoptera	<i>Vultur percnopterus.</i>
The griffin	<i>Vultur gypætos.</i>
The bearded griffin	<i>Gypætos barbatus.</i>
The falcon	<i>Falco lanarius.</i>
The peregrine falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus.</i>
The hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo.</i>
The merlin	<i>Falco acesalon.</i>
The kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus.</i>
The little kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculoides.</i>
The red-footed falcon	<i>Falco rufiges.</i>
The gyrfalcon	<i>Falco islandicus.</i>
The royal eagle	<i>Falco fulvus.</i>
The spotted eagle	<i>Aquila naevia.</i>
The booted eagle	<i>Aquila pennata.</i>
The white-tailed eagle	<i>Haliaëtus albicilla.</i>
The osprey (<i>balbusard</i>)	<i>Pandrin haliaëtus.</i>
The serpent eagle	<i>Circæus gallicus.</i>
The goshawk	<i>Astur palumbarius.</i>
The hawk	<i>Acupiter nisus.</i>
The common kite	<i>Milvus vulgaris.</i>
The black kite	<i>Milvus niger.</i>
The honey buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus.</i>
The common buzzard (<i>buse</i>)	<i>Buteo vulgaris.</i>
The rough-legged buzzard	<i>Buteo lagopus.</i>
The harpy buzzard	<i>Buteo rufus.</i>
The St. Martin buzzard	<i>Buteo cyaneus.</i>

The nocturnal birds of prey are :—

The long-eared owl	<i>Otus vulgaris.</i>
The short-eared owl	<i>Otus brachyotus.</i>

The barn owl.....	<i>Strix flammea.</i>
The wood owl (<i>hulotte</i>).....	<i>Strix stridula.</i>
The great horn-owl.....	<i>Bubo maximus.</i>
The sparrow owl.....	<i>Strix uralensis.</i>
The scope, or little horned owl.....	<i>Ephialtes scops.</i>

Thus, then, in France, thirty-eight species of birds live exclusively upon living prey, and carry on a bitter war against mammals of all sizes, from the lamb, which the eagle carries away in his talons, to the little field-mouse, lying concealed among the corn. They spare neither birds nor reptiles, and frequently not even fishes.



The *Passeres* (Section I., Order II.), in general, feed only upon seeds and insects.

The ornithological classification of the *Passeres*, one of the least natural, has undergone all kinds of variations.

Following the Linnean characteristics, one authority has introduced into this order certain species which another authority very justly separates from it, and a third removes others which possess all the attributes of the true *Passeres*.

These modifications are logical; and without injuring the Linnean classification, they simplify it, and render it more intelligible.

The *Passeres*, in fact, are birds whose general character is found in the outer claw being united to the middle for a more or less considerable extent.

Cuvier, whose method we follow, offers the following explanation in respect to this order:—

"It is the most numerous," he says, "of all the classes. Its character at first seems purely negative; for it embraces all birds which are neither swimmers, stilt-birds, climbers, birds of prey, nor poultry. Yet, if you compare them, you soon detect a great resemblance of structure between them, and, especially, transitions so imperceptible from one genus to another that it is difficult to establish them as sub-divisions.

"They have neither the size of birds of prey nor the definite regimen of the gallinaceæ or aquatic birds; insects, fruits, and seeds furnish their sustenance—seeds more exclusively when they have a large, and insects when they have a small bill; while those with a strong bill pursue even little birds.

"Their stomach is in form a muscular gizzard. They have generally two little cæca; and it is among them we find the singing-birds with the most complex lower larynx. The proportional length of their wings and extent of their sight are as variable as their mode of life."

Taking for his guidance the shape or form of the feet of the Passeres, Cuvier has separated the order into two divisions. In the first and most numerous he places all the species whose external claw is united to the internal only by one or two phalanges. This *division* is composed of four *tribes*: the *Dentirostres* (or tooth-beaked), the *Fissirostres* (or cloven-beaked), the *Conirostres* (or conical-beaked), and the *Tenuirostres* (or thin-beaked).

The second and smaller division of the Passeres comprehends those whose outer claw, nearly as long as the middle, is united to it up to the penultimate articulation. Cuvier has congregated them in a single group, which he

calls *Syndactyli* (that is, "claws, or fingers, joined together"). The latter are more associated with the *Fiasirostres*.

The enumeration of the *Passeres* adopted by Cuvier runs as follows :—

The shrike magpie.....	<i>Lanius.</i>
The great gay shrike magpie.....	<i>Lanius excubitor.</i>
The southern shrike magpie.....	<i>Lanius meridionalis.</i>
The rose-breasted shrike magpie.....	<i>Lanius minor.</i>
The red shrike magpie.....	<i>Lanius rufus.</i>
The red-backed shrike.....	<i>Lanius collurio.</i>
The flycatcher.....	<i>Lanius muscipala.</i>
The spotted flycatcher.....	<i>Muscicapa grisola.</i>
The collared flycatcher.....	<i>Muscicapa albicollis.</i>
The pied flycatcher.....	<i>Muscicapa luctuosa.</i>
The jay.....	<i>Bombycilla.</i>
The Bohemian jay.....	<i>Bombycilla garrula.</i>
The blackbird.....	<i>Turdus merula.</i>
The blue thrush.....	<i>Turdus cyaneus.</i>
The rock thrush.....	<i>Turdus saxatilis.</i>
The ring ouzel.....	<i>Turdus torquatus.</i>
The missel thrush.....	<i>Turdus viscivorus.</i>
The citorne thrush.....	<i>Turdus hiliaris.</i>
The aquatic thrush.....	<i>Turdus hircus.</i>
The redwing.....	<i>Turdus iliacus.</i>
The water ouzel, or dipper.....	<i>Cinclus aquaticus.</i>
The rosy grackle.....	<i>Graculus roseus.</i>
The chough.....	<i>Pyrrhocorax.</i>
The Alpine chough.....	<i>Pyrrhocorax corvus.</i>
The common roller.....	<i>Coracias gracula.</i>
The golden oriole.....	<i>Oriolus galbula.</i>
The warbler.....	<i>Motacilla.</i>
The wood warbler.....	<i>Motacilla sylvia.</i>
The mill-clapper.....	<i>Motacilla rubicola.</i>
The tarter.....	<i>Motacilla rubra.</i>
The fallow-finch, or white-tail.....	<i>Motacilla aenanthe.</i>
The laughing wagtail.....	<i>Motacilla cachinnans.</i>

The stapazin wagtail.....	<i>Motacilla stapazina.</i>
The redbreast.....	<i>Erythacus rubecula.</i>
The nightingale.....	<i>Philomela lusciniæ.</i>
The redstart.....	<i>Ruticilla phoenicæura.</i>
The black redstart.....	<i>Ruticilla Tithys.</i>
The warbler.....	<i>Sylvia tydurdoidea.</i>
The grasshopper warbler.....	<i>Calamodyta locustella.</i>
The water warbler.....	<i>Sylvia aquatica.</i>
The reed warbler.....	<i>Calamodyta arundinacea.</i>
The marsh warbler.....	<i>Sylvia palustris.</i>
The chiff-chaff.....	<i>Sylvia Hippolais.</i>
The black-moustached warbler.....	<i>Sylvia melanopogon.</i>
The barred warbler.....	<i>Sylvia nisorea.</i>
The black-headed warbler.....	<i>Sylvia atricapilla.</i>
The rustic warbler.....	<i>Sylvia rusticola.</i>
The garden warbler.....	<i>Curruca hortensis.</i>
The sedge warbler.....	<i>Calamodyta phragmites.</i>
The ashy warbler.....	<i>Sylvia cinerea.</i>
The chattering warbler.....	<i>Sylvia garrula.</i>
The willow warbler.....	<i>Sylvia trochilus.</i>
The wood warbler.....	<i>Sylvia sylvicola.</i>
The passerine warbler.....	<i>Sylvia passerina.</i>
The Alpine warbler.....	<i>Sylvia Alpina.</i>
The blackcap.....	<i>Curruca atricapilla.</i>
The hedge-sparrow.....	<i>Accentor modularis.</i>
The common wren.....	<i>Sylvia regulus.</i>
The whistler.....	<i>Sylvia sibilatrix.</i>
The little red warbler.....	<i>Sylvia rufa.</i>
Bonelli's warbler.....	<i>Sylvia Bonelli.</i>
The triple-banded wren.....	<i>Sylvia ignicapilla.</i>
The European troglodyte.....	<i>Sylvia troglodytes.</i>
The pied wagtail.....	<i>Motacilla Yarrellii.</i>
The gloomy wagtail.....	<i>Motacilla lugubris.</i>
The white wagtail.....	<i>Motacilla alba.</i>
The gray wagtail.....	<i>Motacilla boarula.</i>
The spring wagtail.....	<i>Motacilla flava.</i>
The titlark, or meadow pipit.....	<i>Anthus pratensis.</i>
The tree pipit.....	<i>Anthus arboreus.</i>
The common Indian pipit.....	<i>Anthus rufulus.</i>

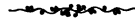
The rock pipit.....	<i>Anthus petros.</i>
Richard's pipit.....	<i>Anthus Richardi.</i>

The series of passerine birds given above belongs to the category of *Dentirostres*.



We now come to the *Fissirostres* :—

The Alpine swift.....	<i>Cypselus alpinus.</i>
The black swift.....	<i>Cypselus murarius.</i>
The chimney swallow.....	<i>Hirundo rustica.</i>
The window swallow.....	<i>Hirundo urbica.</i>
The sand martin.....	<i>Cotyle riparia.</i>
The rock swallow.....	<i>Hirundo rupestris.</i>
The common goatsucker.....	<i>Caprimulgus Europæus.</i>



The *Conirostres* are so called from the conical shape of their beak :—

The skylark.....	<i>Alauda arvensis.</i>
The crested skylark.....	<i>Alauda cristata.</i>
The woodlark.....	<i>Alauda arborea.</i>
The short-toed lark.....	<i>Alauda Calandrella.</i>
Dupont's lark.....	<i>Alauda Duponti.</i>



“The common lark,” says Vieillot, “is the musician of the fields. His graceful melody is the hymn of joy which foretells the approach of spring, and accompanies the first smile of day. It is heard as soon as the sunny days succeed the cold and sombre days of winter; and its accents are the first which strike the ear of the vigilant cultivator.

“The morning song of the lark was the signal among the Greeks for the reaper to begin his daily toil; which

he suspended during that portion of the day when the noontide fires imposed silence on the bird.

"The lark is silent, in fact, about the middle of the day; but when the sun sinks towards the horizon, he fills the air anew with his varied and sonorous modulations. He is dumb again when the sky is cloudy and the weather rainy. Otherwise, he sings throughout the summer season.

"As in nearly every species of bird, the gift of song belongs to the male lark. You see him rising perpendicularly, as by stages, and describing as he rises a kind of spiral curve. Frequently he mounts to a great height, still singing as he goes, and pouring out a fuller melody the higher he soars, so that he can easily be heard even when he is scarcely perceptible to the eye. He sustains himself a long time in the air, and descends slowly until, within ten or twelve feet of the ground, he darts downwards like an arrow. His voice dies away as he draws near; and when he reaches the earth he is completely mute.

"This voice, so remarkable for purity and melody, far from losing its power when the bird is caged, is actually preserved and enriched; and if he is caught young, and brought up with care, he becomes one of the most precious of birds—less on account of the beauty of his natural accents, perhaps, than on that of his prodigious memory, which enables him to retain those of other birds and any song you may choose to teach him; he repeating all these with a purity and a flexibility of organ which gives them fresh charms, and imitating them only to embellish them."

The male birds intended to be bred as singing-birds are

caught in October or November. They soon become accustomed to confinement, and grow so familiar that they will eat from your hand, on the table, or even from the dish; but their cage ought to be covered over with a cloth, otherwise, obeying the instinct which continuously impels them to rise perpendicularly, they will kill themselves by dashing their head against the roof of their prison.

Moreover, the bottom of the cage must be strewn with a thick layer of fine sand, so that the bird may roll himself in it, and obtain some relief from the insects which torment him. It is good, moreover, to place in a corner some fresh turf, and to renew it frequently.

The young birds which are caught in the nest require to be fed with soaked poppy-seed, and, when they can eat without help, with crumbs of bread likewise moistened, and mixed with all kinds of seeds.

When they begin to sing, you should prepare for them a paste of boiled meat and bread-crumbs soaked in milk; to which you may add crushed poppy-seed, barley-seed, millet, and hemp-seed. Only observe, if this latter nutriment be supplied too freely, why—according to an old author, on whom we throw the entire responsibility of the assertion—their plumage will turn *completely black*!

After being domesticated for a couple of years, the voice of the young males attains its complete development: nevertheless, that it may be really perfect, they must be separated from those likely to injure their taste.

You must especially take care not to attempt to teach your larks too many airs at once; and you must guard against any false, harsh, or discordant sounds reaching their ears. If any strange song distract their memory

from the last modulations on which they ought to fix their attention, their strain will become a confused and fantastic mixture of the different sounds they may happen to have caught up previously.

In a captive condition, the lark sings throughout the year; and his life is prolonged to ten or twelve years, according to some authorities, to twenty and twenty-four, according to others.

Too frequently these poor creatures, transferred to a medium so widely different from that for which God has created them, eventually become epileptic, especially when they reach the threshold of old age.

In freedom, the female lark, in our temperate climes, begins about the month of May to build her nest upon the ground, between two clods, or sheltered by a tuft of herb-age. She makes use of little bits of straw, of slender roots, and of hair, to make her nest smooth, and almost without consistency. She lays in it four or five eggs, with brown spots on a grayish ground.

After fourteen or fifteen days' incubation, the young ones are hatched; and another fifteen days suffice for the mother to rear her brood, and place them in a condition to withdraw themselves from the pursuit of their numerous enemies.

The little larks quit their nest early, especially if their mother discovers in the vicinity any hostile traces; so that the bird-catchers often find the whole family removed long before the day they counted upon seizing them.

The moment the young birds can take care of themselves, the mother dreams of new loves and a new brood. In warm countries, she lays three times in a year.



THE BIRDS HAVE TAKEN FLIGHT.

“ But,” say Vieillot, whom I have already quoted, “let no one think that maternal tenderness is crushed by so

active a necessity of reproduction, and that to a mother's care and affection suddenly succeeds a complete forgetfulness of her first-born nurslings. You will see her hovering for a long time above her inexperienced covey, following them with anxious eye, directing all their movements, providing for all their wants, watching them in every danger; and her sublime instinct of maternal love, devotedness, and abnegation is carried to such an excess in this feeble and interesting bird, that, far from being, as in almost all other creatures, a consequence of that which disposes them to become mothers, often it precedes it by a considerable period, and develops itself, according to Buffon, in their very earliest age."

Buffon possessed a lark fed nearly in solitude, when three or four young ones of another covey were placed in her cage.

The young bird was immediately seized with so strong an affection for the new-comers, that she began to cherish them and feed them and warm them under her wings. In spite of the careful attention of her master, she died, at last, of inanition, in the midst of the excessively tender cares with which she surrounded them, and the loss of which not a fledgling survived.

Whether the lark is or is not a bird of passage, our naturalists have not determined. Buffon says nothing on the subject, and numerous authorities answer in the negative.

Vieillot pretends—for he does not prove—that at the beginning of winter the whole family divide into a couple

of hands—that of the voyagers and that of the sedentary; that the former traverse the Mediterranean, and spread themselves over all Syria, along the shores of the Red Sea, into Egypt, Nubia, and Abyssinia; whence, when the summer comes again, they return to repair the enormous losses experienced by their companions, who venture to brave in their own land the severity of winter, and of the destructive war waged against them by all kinds of enemies.

However this may be, it seems certain that the larks, at the commencement of the winter season, congregate together in numerous bodies, and abandon the elevated plains which they inhabit to seek better sheltered localities.

Frequently, when a rigorous and unforeseen frost comes on, they disappear, as if by magic, to return so soon as some days of milder temperature are experienced.

If the cold once more shows itself, if the earth remains long covered with snow or hardened by frost, the condition of the poor birds becomes exceedingly miserable. They gather then by the side of the main roads, in inhabited localities, and neglect even the duty of self-preservation; so that you may knock them down with a pole, or even catch them with your hand.

You will naturally expect that a bird whose principal food is insects and chrysalids will find protection in those countries where locusts are not a less destructive scourge than the pestilence and famine which follow in their train. And, consequently, the larks have always been held in veneration in the Levant, and especially in the island of Lemnos.

In France, on the contrary, they are the object of a desperate hostility, which is waged in accordance with rules and tactics founded on the study of the character of the poor victims. Numerous naturalists assert that the species has considerably diminished within the last fifty years, and that if it is not yet completely destroyed, its partial preservation is owing entirely to its prodigious fecundity.

Towards the month of September, when their season of love and song and maternal care is over, and rich food is teeming all around them, the larks gain that plumpness and that succulency of flesh which renders them so much valued by epicures, and to which the *pâtés* of Pithiviers owe their reputation. Then, too, the massacre of these birds commences, continuing pitilessly to the very end of winter.

The hunters do not direct their efforts towards the capture of isolated individuals, but, rather, of considerable masses of larks; and, unfortunately, no bird more easily falls a victim to these razzias.

Her confidingness, her gentle manners, her sociability, and, above all, her curiosity, answer but too readily the purpose of her designing enemies. The latter place in the midst of the furrows where the lark takes refuge some glittering objects, and set them in motion; most frequently a *mirror*—that is, a piece of wood fashioned like a donkey's back, supported by its middle, and studded all over with bits of glass, or steel and copper buttons; anything will do, provided it will reflect the sun's rays. Immediately, yielding to a kind of instinct, the larks hasten to the spot, flutter about the unknown light, enter under the

net, and present themselves defenceless to the shots of the fowlers, until the reports on every side, and the death of their companions, whose bodies strew the ground, inspire them with a wholesome terror, and those who can, take flight.

In cold and gloomy weather, when the sky is cloudy, or at evening, after sunset, the larks fly to and fro in large bodies, skimming and not rising above the earth: accordingly, the fowlers, by frightening them, compel them to push forward until they are enclosed within immense nets, supported by short poles, and shut in on three sides. The bird-catchers likewise have resort to what is called the *tonnelle murée*, a kind of enormous sack, with an opening ten feet square, and flanked to the right and left by broad nets, which enlarge in such a manner as to concentrate the whole troop in the tunnel, where they are easily slaughtered.

However, none of these means of destruction can be compared with that which the French call the *chasse aux gluaux*—that is, literally, “the bird-lime hunt.”

On a heathy plain, or fallow-field, a square plot is marked off with fifteen hundred to three thousand willow-branches from three to four feet high, thickly coated with bird-lime, and planted so lightly that the bird cannot touch without upsetting them. Then, around the arena where the hapless larks are collected, detachments of bird-catchers form a cordon of three to four thousand yards in extent, and, gradually moving towards each other, they contract the square, and enclose within it thousands and ten thousands of victims. The commander-in-chief, and the officers under

his orders, skilfully direct the manœuvres, and force the larks, often after three hours of stratagem and watchfulness, to enter, partly hopping and partly flying, into the fatal enclosure. No sooner are they thus ensnared than their feathers get entangled in the glutinous branches, and they find themselves wholly unable to free themselves from the accursed substance which paralyzes all their efforts, and renders them helpless victims. A "hunt" conducted after this fashion frequently realizes a hundred dozen larks.

Another mode of catching these birds—more generally adopted, perhaps, than the preceding, because it is less expensive, and requires less skill—is by ensnaring them. The snares consist of a couple of horse hairs, arranged in a slip-knot, and attached to a string several yards in length. These are hidden amongst the heather, or in some freshly ploughed furrows, or in a hole in the snow; care being taken that they are not more than half an inch above the ground. The bird-catchers scatter about some seed, and, at suitable points, station tame larks as decoys. The famished birds, reassured by the presence of their kind, assemble from every quarter, and are caught by the head or feet in the snares, where they are strangled to death.

A simple process is familiar to our country-lads: they go forth in the dusk, one armed with a club and a lantern, another carrying a bell, and a third loaded with a bag. The glare of the lantern and the ringing of the bell rouse the larks from their hiding-places, whereupon they are quickly knocked down and captured.

Such devastating processes, unfortunately, depopulate



HUNTING LARKS.

our fields of useful auxiliaries who destroy by tens of thousands the manifold swarms of injurious insects, and,
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too frequently, a scanty crop punishes the imprudence and greediness of the hunters.

In 1861 M. Bonjean published the following statement of the fatal consequences ensuing from the massacre of the little birds :—

“ Myriads of insects, endowed with a frightful fecundity, live exclusively at the cost of our most precious vegetables.

“ The stalwart oak has for its enemies the *stag-beetle*, the *cerambyx heros*, and others.

“ The destructive *scolyti* attach themselves to the elm.

“ The fir and the pine succumb to the depredations of the *bostrichi*, and to the incessant attacks of several species of *scarabaei*.

“ The olive-tree sees its timber mined by the *philobacera*, while its fruits are devoured by the innumerable larvæ of the olive-tree fly (*Dacus oleae*).

“ The vine, in certain localities, can with difficulty resist the ravages of the *pyralis*.

“ The roots of barley and other cereals are attacked by the white worm (the cockchafer's larva); at the base of their stalk, before flowering, by the *cecylomyia*; and, later still, at the moment the seed is forming, by the *calandra granaria*.

“ The field-cabbage, and other cruciferæ, are beset by equally numerous enemies. Several varieties of altises destroy the plant as it rises above the ground; other parasites wait until the silica is formed to choose there a domicile, and nourish themselves at the expense of the seed.

“ The roots of all the leguminosæ are eaten by mole-crickets, and other burrowing insects, while the larva of

the *bruchis pisi* lives concealed in peas and lentils, of which it leaves us only the husk.

"The complaints of the vine-bearing countries, on the subject of the pyralis, sufficiently attest the greatness of the evil, so far as this kind of culture is concerned. From 1828 to 1837—that is, in ten years—and only in twenty-three communes of the Mâconnais and Beaujolais, representing three thousand hectares of vines, the damage done by the pyralis was estimated, according to a calculation founded upon official data, at 34,080,000 francs, or upwards of 3,000,000 per annum.

"As for the cereals, we cannot calculate at less than 4,000,000 francs the value of the barley destroyed in a single year, in one of the French departments of the East, by the cecidomyia larva alone.—In a special notice, based upon a great number of carefully studied facts, M. Bazin does not hesitate to attribute to this insect the insufficiency of the crops from which France suffered so greatly in the three years preceding 1856: in certain fields, the loss was to nearly one half the crop.....

"From the beginning, man must have succumbed in his unequal strife with the insect-world, had not God given him, in the bird, a powerful auxiliary, a faithful ally, who accomplishes in a wonderful manner the work which man is unable to undertake.

"The purely insectivorous birds are:—the woodpecker, the climbing birds generally, the goatsucker, the cuckoo, the different varieties of swallows, but, more particularly, those charming musicians of the fields—nightingales, warblers, stone-chats, redbreasts, redstarts, wagtails, pipits, willow-warblers, wrens, and the troglodyte, that friend of

the cottager—all of whom emulate each other in rendering us inappreciable services—services as gratuitous as they are ill-rewarded, because we have no accurate idea of their value.



THE INSECTS' ENEMY.

“ Permit me, therefore, to cite an instance, which is furnished by one of M. F. Prévost’s tables, in reference to the martin. Eighteen of these birds were killed, between the 15th of April and the 29th of August, at nightfall, as they were returning to their nest. The insects whose remains were found in their stomach amounted to no fewer than 8690, which gives, for each bird daily, an average of 483 insects destroyed. Another table presents analogous results in the case of the winter warbler. And among the insects thus destroyed figure those which are most formidable to the agriculturist—the corn-weevil, the pyralis, the cockchafer, and a host of other destructive coleoptera.

“ Now, how much mischief is caused by a single one of these insects the reader can form an idea, by remembering that the cockchafer lays from 70 to 100 eggs, soon trans-

formed into as many white worms, which, for one or two years, live exclusively on the roots of our most precious vegetables. The corn-weevil produces 70 to 90 eggs, which, deposited in as many grains of corn, develop therein into larvæ and devour their receptacle; the value of a complete bearded spike of corn is, therefore, the loss sustained through the agency of a single weevil. The pyrale deposits on the vine-leaves 100 to 120 eggs, whence issue as many caterpillars; these, lying concealed under the bark during winter, issue forth at spring-time to gnaw the leaves and buds. In this way, a solitary pyrale destroys from one hundred to one hundred and thirty clusters of grapes in their germ.

“And now, if you will compare the two classes of figures which I have put before you, and admit that, out of the five hundred insects destroyed daily by a single bird, only one-tenth may belong to the aforesaid depredators—namely, forty weevils and ten pyrales (and these figures are below the truth), we obtain an average of 3200 grains of corn and 1150 clusters of grapes as saved for you in a single day by this little bird.

“Allow as large a share as you will to the other natural causes which may help to check the ravages of these insects,—reduce as much as you will the work performed by the bird, and enough will still remain to justify the profound saying of a contemporary writer: ‘The bird can live without man; but man cannot live without the bird.’

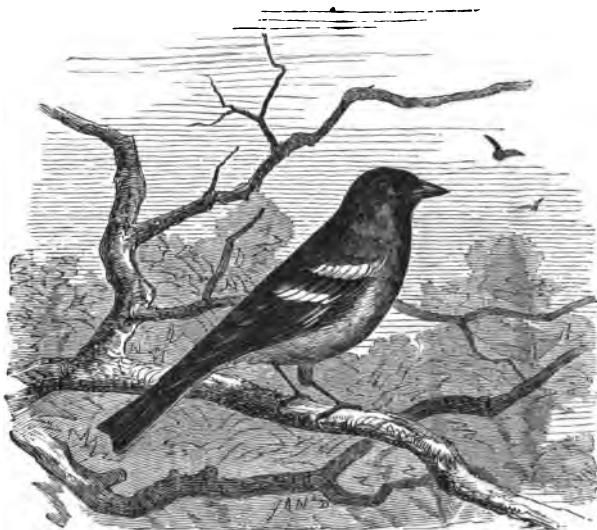
“And, in truth, who but the little bird could lie in wait for and seize the corn-weevil, only a sixth of an inch in length, when, in the heart of a corn-field, she prepares to deposit her eggs in the nascent seeds? Who could seize

the butterfly of the *pyrale* when, for the same purpose, it hovers about the vine-stocks; or the caterpillar of the same insect, when it crawls forth at spring, from a seventh to a sixth of an inch in length?

“And, above all, who could get at those microscopical eggs and larvæ, of which a single tomtit consumes upwards of 200,000 in a year?

“Man, strangely blinded, is the most terrible enemy of these gentle and useful creatures.”





CHAPTER XV.

THE PASSERINE BIRDS.

CONTINUATION OF REMARKS UPON THE DENTIROSTRES PASSERINES*—THE CANARY OF LEGEND AND FABLE—THE CONIROSTRES PASSERINES—THE SYNDACTYLES—THE SCANSORES.



ET us now return to the other *Conirostres*. They are:—

The titmouse, properly so called	<i>Parus</i> .
The great tit	<i>Parus major</i> .
The cole tit	<i>Parus aler</i> .
The blue tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i> .

* The Passerine Birds are now more commonly called *Insessores*, or Perching Birds.

The crested tit	<i>Parus cristatus.</i>
The marsh tit.....	<i>Parus palustris.</i>
The long-tailed tit.....	<i>Parus caudatus.</i>
The whiskered tit.....	<i>Parus biarmicus.</i>
The penduline tit.....	<i>Egithalus pendulinus.</i>
The common bunting.....	<i>Emberiza citrinella.</i>
The black-headed bunting	<i>Emberiza melanocephala.</i>
The meadow bunting.....	<i>Emberiza ica.</i>
The ciril bunting	<i>Emberiza cirius.</i>
The reed bunting.....	<i>Emberiza scheniclus.</i>
The marsh bunting.....	<i>Emberiza palustris.</i>
The corn bunting	<i>Emberiza miliaria.</i>



THE MOUNTAIN CHAFFINCH.

The ortolan.....	<i>Emberiza hortulana.</i>
The Mytilene bunting	<i>Emberiza lesbia.</i>
The snow bunting (<i>plectrophanes</i>)	<i>Emberiza nivalis.</i>
The ash-coloured bunting.....	<i>Emberiza aesia.</i>
The mountain chaffinch	<i>Emberiza calcarata.</i>
The common or house sparrow.....	<i>Fringilla domestica.</i>
The wood sparrow.....	<i>Fringilla sylvia.</i>
The Spanish sparrow.....	<i>Fringilla Hispanolensis.</i>
The common chaffinch	<i>Fringilla caelebs.</i>
The Ardennes chaffinch	<i>Monti fringilla.</i>
The linnet	<i>Fringilla cannabina.</i>
The mountain linnet.....	<i>Fringilla montana.</i>

The little linnet.....	<i>Fringilla linaria.</i>
The cini or Provence canary.....	<i>Fringilla serinus.</i>
The snow chaffinch.....	<i>Fringilla nivalis.</i>

Perhaps we ought to add to this enumeration of French birds an exotic species coming from the Canary Islands, but now completely domesticated in France, since it breeds in every district, and, at need, allies itself with the Provence canary, which is really and truly a native. Born in a cage, and given up voluntarily, or by accident, to a liberty which she has never known *because* born in slavery, the canary builds her nest, and lays, in the open air, and conforms herself in all respects to the habits of the Provençal canary.

The training and bringing up of domesticated canaries dates back, in France, to a tolerably remote epoch, as is shown in the following narrative.

Among the plants flourishing at this very day, and overgrowing the base of ancient walls and solitary corners, which seek even to conquer for themselves a small obscure area in cultivated ground, we must place foremost the *stellaria media* of botanists, or chickweed.

Prior to the reign of Charles VI., this plant was unanimously condemned as unprofitable, and rooted out when it found its way into a field. Everybody remorselessly trod it under foot, when it happened to fall in their way.

Now, at the epoch when that most terrible of maladies, mental alienation, fell upon the poor king, and when his physicians had recourse in vain to all known medicinal remedies, and even to magic, for his cure, some one be-thought himself that the nephew of the *archidâtre* of the

late king, Charles V.,—Guibert du Celsoy, or de Salceto, *doyen* of the faculty of medicine at Paris,—had never been consulted.

Undoubtedly the nephew inherited the secrets of his uncle, as he had inherited his fortune and his house in the Rue St. Jacques, close against the church of St. Severinus, and bearing as its ensign an iron cross.

The royal attendants, therefore, went in search of him, and whether he would or no, conveyed him into the presence of the unfortunate king. Antoine Guibert du Celsoy, notwithstanding the profound solitude in which he lived, passed, rightly or wrongly, for a physician as able as his uncle, and one cannot but be astonished that he had not been sooner summoned. His epitaph, which, a few years ago, was still legible in the little church of St. Maur, in the small village of Celsoy, near Langres, affirms, that—

“Maistre fu es arts excellent
Et en médecine ensement
De la pratique souverain
Pareil n'avoit en corps humain.”

It did not do to declare the king's malady incurable; for, a short time previously, two Cordelier monks, called into consultation like Guibert, who had declared human science powerless against a supernatural evil, had been hung. Having made this hazardous statement, they were compelled to exorcise the king; and the king, finding himself worse after the exorcisms, the poor monks were sent to the gibbet, on the plea that, instead of expelling the evil spirits, they had evoked some of greater power.

Therefore, Antoine Guibert, after having carefully

studied for upwards of a week the symptoms of the royal madness, declared that every malady which had been so long in coming to a crisis would occupy equally as long a time in dying out; and the king having been ill for ten years, ten years would also be required to effect a cure.

Having taken this prudent precaution, he began to prescribe for Charles VI., and, among other remedies, ordered him infusions of a fresh plant, which he involved in a profound mystery.

To the great surprise of those who attended upon the king, and especially of the demoiselle Odette de Champdivers, it was soon remarked that the king's face lost its fiery hue, and that his disposition became more pliant. Antoine Guibert, named, in honour of this first success, chaplain of the chapel of St. John Baptist, in the cathedral of Paris, ordered that the invalid should take every day, for a couple of hours, a bath prepared with the same herb, not only boiled in boiling water, but also thrown, fresh and living, into the bath.

Either owing to this treatment, or some accidental circumstance, the king entered into one of those crises of calm and comparative intelligence which characterized his disease.

I need not tell you that every voice exclaimed, "A miracle!" and that the whole world was eager to know what potent herb Antoine Guibert so mysteriously made use of. He was watched so closely that it was found to be *morgeline*, or chickweed.

Accordingly, everybody, first at court, and afterwards in the city, was fain to place himself under a *régime* of a plant so beneficial, to which all kinds of virtues began to

be attributed. Queen Isabeau herself took daily baths, like those of the king, in the hope they would render her skin still whiter, and add to the charm of her fatal beauty.

The gifts of the queen, and the magnificence of the courtiers, enabled Guibert to raise, in his native village of Celsoy, a church, which still exists, and in which he consecrated to the memory of his uncle a magnificent monument.

After having employed decoctions of chickweed, and taken baths perfumed with its essences, people had recourse to it as to a *resolvent* and *astringent* vulnerary, and distilled from it an eye-water deemed infallible: in short, it found its way into the preparation of every cosmetic, and was even eaten as a salad, and introduced into broths and soups for invalids, called *soupes au roi*.

In about the sixth year of Charles the Sixth's treatment, Antoine Guibert, on the plea of bad health, handed him over to his assistants and substitutes, reduced his visits to court, appearing there but very rarely, and died about 1409, leaving a reputation equal to that of his uncle, with whom, we may add, parenthetically, he is frequently confounded.

Medicaments and simples have, like the books of which Horace speaks, their destiny; that is to say, after immeasurable eulogy they are allowed gradually to fall into a profound forgetfulness,

" Though they have ne'er deserved
Th' excessive honour, nor the chill neglect."

The chickweed did not escape the common lot; not

only did it cease to be employed as a remedy against insanity, but even the perfumers gradually abandoned its use in the preparation of their cosmetics, and the cooks no longer served it up at their tables in salads and *soupes au roi*.

Chance, however, a century afterwards, brought chickweed again into some degree of popularity, under the following circumstances.

Henry III. was exceedingly fond of birds, and especially of *canaries*, as they were called in reference to the islands of which they were supposed to be natives. He possessed some fine species, whose race he endeavoured to improve by scientific combinations of cross-breeds. According to the ideas of that epoch, a canary, to reach perfection, required liteness of figure, a moderate height upon the feet, a dead yellow colour, a strong bill, and a "brilliant" voice.

On every side Henry III. sought for information as to the best means of training canaries. One of his courtiers told him that in Holland, where a great traffic in these birds was carried on, sprigs of chickweed were placed in their cages, and they delighted in pecking at it, and thus preserved themselves from the epidemic maladies too often fatal to these birds.

The king did not rest until he had piled up masses of chickweed in every one of his cages. To his great surprise, large numbers of birds fell victims to a disease which was christened *astriction*, and which was really a kind of dry colic.

Not without reason, the chickweed was accused of being the cause of this catastrophe, and thenceforth was banished from the aviaries of the Louvre.

Now, one morning, when the king was going to pay his devotions at the church of St. Severinus, he passed through the Rue St. Jacques, and in so doing heard some canaries singing with most enchanting beauty.

He raised his head, and saw above the door of the house to which they belonged an iron cross in the guise of an emblem or device. Entering without ceremony, he went straight to a magnificent aviary, full of canaries, and embellished everywhere with chickweed.

"Do you not know," said Henry to a young man who had advanced to receive the unexpected visitor, "that this accursed plant has poisoned all the king's birds?"

"I have heard so, sir," answered the young man; "and the reason is, that the people entrusted with the duty of supplying chickweed to the king's cages have confounded with it another plant which it resembles greatly; this is named *anagallis*, and men attribute to it, rightly or wrongly, the faculty of extracting arrow-heads from the wounds in which they have embedded themselves. However this may be, the *anagallis* is a poison for birds, while the true chickweed, the *morgeline*, refreshes them, and preserves them from premature death. The *morgeline* bears white flowers, and the *anagallis* brick-red flowers, or flowers varying from white to blue."

"And where did you learn all this knowledge, young man?"

"In the manuscripts bequeathed to me by my great-uncles, the head-physicians of Kings John, Charles V., and Charles VI.,—Guibert and Antoine du Celsoy."

"Ah, well, you shall be head-physician to my birds," answered the king, laughing.

Charles du Celsoy did not disdain to accept this official position at court; and from his time chickweed has been recognized as the proper food for the numerous canaries brought up at Paris, where the rich and the poor, but especially the latter, are passionately fond of birds and flowers; undoubtedly, through the extreme difficulty with which birds are reared, and flowers cultivated.

Let us now resume our catalogue of the birds of France and Great Britain.

Next to the Provençal canary come, among the Coni-rostres :—

The chaffinch.....	<i>Fringilla coelebs.</i>
The siskin.....	<i>Carduelis spinus.</i>
The common grosbeak.....	<i>Fringilla coccothraustes.</i>
The mountain finch.....	<i>Fringilla montifringilla.</i>
The greenfinch.....	<i>Fringilla chloris.</i>
The bullfinch.....	<i>Pyrrhula vulgaris.</i>
The white-winged crossbill.....	<i>Loxia leucoptera.</i>
The parrot crossbill.....	<i>Pyrrhula ptyopsittacus.</i>
The crossbill.....	<i>Loxia curvirostra.</i>
The starling.....	<i>Sturnus vulgaris.</i>
The raven.....	<i>Corvus corax.</i>
The crow.....	<i>Corvus corone.</i>
The rook.....	<i>Corvus frugilegus.</i>
The jackdaw.....	<i>Corvus monedula.</i>
The pie.....	<i>Corvus pica.</i>
The jay.....	<i>Garrulus glandularius.</i>
The nutcracker.....	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes.</i>
The common roller.....	<i>Coracias garrula.</i>



Those Insesores which have a slender and feeble beak



THE BULLFINCH.

are called *Tenuirostres*; a genus composed of the following birds:—

The nut-hatch	<i>Sitta Europaea.</i>
The common brown creeper.....	<i>Certhia familiaris.</i>
The rack or wall-climber.....	<i>Certhia muraria.</i>
The common hoopoe.....	<i>Upupa epops.</i>
The Cornish chough.....	<i>Corvus graculus.</i>

We class the *Syndactyli*—i.e., those whose claws are linked together by a narrow membrane—among the *Insessores*:—

The common bee-eater.....	<i>Merops apiaster.</i>
The kingfisher.....	<i>Alcedo ispida.</i>

The *Scansores* or *Climbers*, are:—

The great black woodpecker.....	<i>Picus martius.</i>
The green woodpecker.....	<i>Picus viridis.</i>
The ashy woodpecker.....	<i>Picus canus.</i>
The great spotted woodpecker.....	<i>Dryobates major.</i>
The common spotted woodpecker.....	<i>Dryobates medius.</i>
The lesser spotted woodpecker.....	<i>Dryobates minor.</i>

The three-toed woodpecker	<i>Picoides tridactylus.</i>
The wry-neck	<i>Yunx torquilla.</i>
The cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus.</i>
The spotted cuckoo	<i>Cuculus glandarius.</i>

I propose to relate to you, in reference to the woodpeckers, the details of an act of devotion and intelligence which I obtained from M. Servaux, formerly attached to the Ministry of Public Instruction, who, in his hours of leisure, was a most enthusiastic ornithologist. I tell the tale as told to me :—

“It was towards the end of winter when I remarked, on the Montmorency estate (in the department of the Seine-et-Oise), that two woodpeckers (of the species *Picus viridis*) had begun to excavate their nest in the trunk of a majestic but decaying elm, at an elevation of about thirteen feet above the ground. In the middle of May I began to think the female bird must have laid her eggs; and therefore, by means of a ladder, I clambered up the tree. But I found it impossible to introduce my arm into the opening; the tree was too thick, and the burrow or nest about twenty inches deep. For half an hour I vainly attempted to reach the eggs; trying, at one time, a branch smeared over with bird-lime, and, at another, a curved pewter ladle.

“At length, wearied with my fruitless efforts, I decided on closing up the entrance to the nest, in the hope that, when eager to lay, the female would deposit her eggs (as I had often observed to be the case) in a hole in some neighbouring tree.

“I thought no more about the woodpeckers, and, in fact, had already forgotten them, when, about four o’clock

**THE WOODPECKER'S INGENUITY.**

one afternoon, passing through the same avenue, I heard repeated blows being struck against the elm I had visited

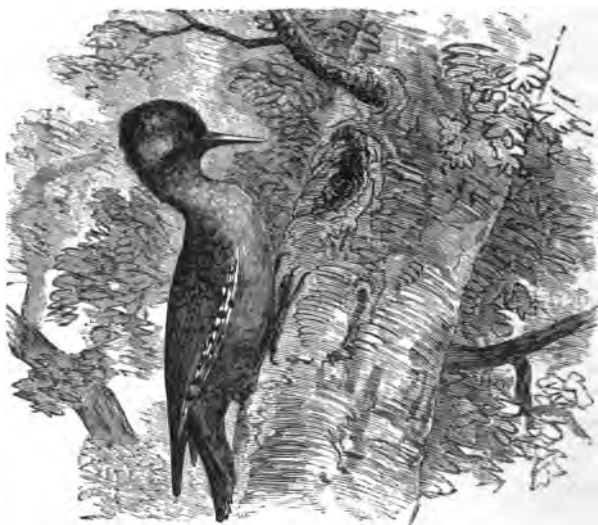
in the morning. Advancing cautiously to the spot, I perceived, clinging and hooked on with his claws to the trunk of the tree, at a point just on a level with the bottom of the nest—in other words, about twenty inches below the mouth—a woodpecker, who was so engrossed with his operation that he did not see me, but permitted me to draw quite close to the spot. Then he flew away; and great was my astonishment when I heard, *within* the tree, the same continuous pecking or hammering I had heard *without*. Evidently I had shut up the female in her nest; yet the poor creature, sitting over her brood, had given no sign of life in the morning, spite of my attempts to carry off her eggs.

“Once more I planted my ladder against the tree, and glued my ear against the spot where the incessant and precipitate strokes indicated the prisoner’s longing for liberty. I made a noise, and she desisted; but a moment afterwards recommenced more lustily than ever. On *his* side the male had not been inactive, I can assure you; for the bark of the tree was removed over a breadth of from three and a half to four inches, and with a depth of upwards of an inch and a quarter. I need hardly add that the beginning of the hole corresponded exactly with that which the female was working in the interior.

“The enforced captivity, which I had quite involuntarily imposed on the poor female, had lasted long enough; and after having convinced myself of the fact which I have just related to you, I withdrew the stone which I had used in the morning to close up the nest. The female darted forth immediately; but I contrived to seize her as she passed, that I might examine her attentively. As you

may suppose, she was exceedingly wild, very much agitated, with bristling feathers, and her bill all covered with sawdust. When I let her go, she uttered two or three cries as she flew away. Was this due to the fear I had caused her, or to delight in her freedom?

“When I quitted the house I told the gardener of the

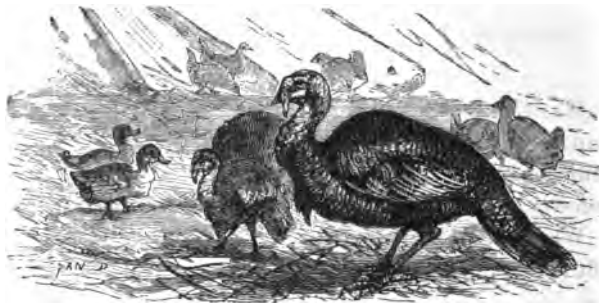


AT WORK.

little incident in which I had taken a prominent part. He joked me pleasantly, affirming that it was impossible; until, in the course of the day, he caught sight of the two woodpeckers engaged at their work, and labouring so industriously that they continued at it in spite of his appearance, and until he attempted to touch them. I then

obtained an explanation of the way in which so large a hole had been made in so short a time, and which, very probably, would soon have provided the prisoner with a means of exit. To restore his mate to liberty, the woodpecker had had recourse to the obliging assistance of a comrade—it may be of his brother.”





CHAPTER XVI.

THE WADERS.

THE GALLINÆ—THE TURKEY—THE WADERS—THE PRESSIROSTRES AND
CULTRIROSTRES GALLINACEOUS BIRDS—THE LONGIROSTRES WADERS—
A STORY FROM AUDUBON.



THE family of the Gallinæ is especially interesting
on account of its numerous domestic species:

The pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus.</i>
The golden pheasant.....	<i>Phasianus pictus.</i>
The fan-tailed sand-grouse	<i>Pterocles alchata.</i>
The capercaillie	<i>Tetrao urogallus.</i>
The black grouse	<i>Tetrao tetrix.</i>
The ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus vulgaris.</i>
The common francolin.....	<i>Francolinus vulgaris.</i>
The red-legged partridge.....	<i>Caccabis rubra.</i>
The rock partridge	<i>Perdix petrosa.</i>
The common partridge	<i>Perdix cinerea.</i>
The quail.....	<i>Coturnix dactylisomans.</i>
The wood-pigeon.....	<i>Columba palumbus.</i>
The stock-dove	<i>Columba oenas.</i>
The rock-dove.....	<i>Columba livia.</i>

The turtle-dove.....	<i>Turtur auritus.</i>
The pheasant.....	<i>Phasianus colchicus.</i>



We must add to the Gallina—the Turkey. Though imported quite recently into France, it must certainly be counted now among those which have been thoroughly domesticated, and even naturalized.

When Charles IX., at the age of twenty, and on the 26th of November 1570, married, at Mézières, Elizabeth, daughter of the Emperor Maximilian II., there was served at the bridal banquet a dish of which the guests (as d'Aubigné, a contemporary chronicler, records) could not be induced to taste, except with extreme suspicion, in spite of the eulogiums of the master-cooks, who had purchased it at its weight in gold, and imported it from Spain at a very great expense.

This dish consisted of two large birds, stuffed with truffles, and brought to the table on massive plates of gold, retaining, according to the custom of the *cuisine* with respect to feathered birds, their head, and tail, and wings. The head did not appear very inviting, on account of the long neck, covered all over with fleshly excrescences, and terminating in a kind of tuft of black coarse hair.

The young queen, to display her courage and gaiety in the presence of the king, was the first to taste, with dainty lips, a morsel of the breast of one of these birds. She pronounced so warm a panegyric on the savoury and delicate flesh, that the guests could not do otherwise than imitate her. Each, therefore, *reginæ ad exemplar*, bravely tasted of the unknown dish, and joined in an eulogistic chorus with the queen; after which, the Sire Biron de-

clared that so excellent a bird must forthwith be introduced into France, and the Sire de Mesmes strongly supported his opinion.

And so it chanced that, before long, some turkeys, imported from Spain to Bourges, grew acclimatized in that city, and multiplied, and in due time spread over all the country, being known then, and for some time after, as the *oiseaux de la paix boiteuse*, or "birds of the lame peace." They derived this strange designation from the circumstance that the Sieur Malassis de Mesmes and the Sire Biron, who limped with his right leg, were the authors of the peace signed on the 25th of August, at Saint Germain-en-Laye, between the Huguenots and the Roman Catholics, and also, as we have shown, the promoters of the introduction of the turkey into France.

I have told you of the massacres which the bird-catchers commit among the larks. The pigeons, which belong to those gallinaceous birds I am about to describe, are not more fortunate, and in the Pyrenees are subject to terrific slaughter.

Situated between the Mediterranean and the ocean, the Pyrenees offer a natural resting-place to the tribes of migratory birds which direct their annual flights sometimes towards the north, sometimes towards the south. The western chain, being less elevated and less barren, mainly attracts the passing legions, whose diversity of instinct, song, and plumage render them so interesting to the observer.

Early in the spring, the sea-swallows reascend the

rivers, whose surface they skim with a rapid wing, followed by gulls, and teal, and divers, whose nests repose on the wave-worn reefs of ocean. The hoopoo soon makes his appearance in those parts of the moorlands which are beginning to grow green, and sings as he elevates the feathers of his graceful crest; the cuckoo anticipates in the woods the birth of the young leaves, and fills the air with the two notes of its monotonous couplet.

Summer comes in its turn with the lorient, which, with its joyous cadences, seems to defy the thrush; the vultures, exiled by winter, return in troops to the mountain-heights; the *barbu* takes a mighty swoop, its broad wings surpassing in width even those of the great eagle; and the bald-headed *arrian* descends into the depths of the ravines, and hovers above the waters.

With autumn arrive the muriers, the titlarks, the starlings, the thrushes, the quails; while among the golden broom and yellowing brushes, the nightingales, the linnets, the goldfinches, and the whole family of singing-birds fly in numerous troops, call one another with lively summons, assemble together, and then redouble their choral farewells before they depart in search of another home and another spring.

The oceanic pigeon, or "blue rock" (*ramier bleu*), which plays so important a part in the Iberian cosmogony, makes its appearance in the Pyrenees in September.

The rapidity of its noisy flight is unequalled; and it is impossible to give any idea of the tumult made by these birds when they swoop down in tens of thousands upon the vast beechen forests.

The mountaineers hunt them with great nets stretched

at the extremity of a valley. The choice of the locality and the skilfulness of the hunters concur to render the chase more or less fortunate. The products are sufficiently lucrative to render each *draw-net* an important and privileged property.

"The hawk and the hobby are the only birds of prey which the pigeon need fear," says the Basque writer Chao; "the swiftness of his flight shelters him from all others." The hawk, in fact, springs from the ground perpendicularly, and turns over upon his back to seize his victim, which he strike with his trenchant bill and bony breast; the wood-pigeons, taught by instinct, elude the attack by suddenly lowering their flight.

The idea of hunting with nets is founded upon this procedure of the birds. The fowlers post themselves upon the hills, within a radius of one thousand yards, close by the nets, and armed with white rackets or battledores, resembling a hawk in form. Their piercing eyes are never turned from the horizon, where almost imperceptible vapours reveal to them each swarm of pigeons fully twenty minutes before its approach. They exchange mutual warnings by cries and signals, and hurl their rackets so opportunely and with so much intelligence that they rarely fail to drive the pigeons into the fatal direction. The moment which causes the greatest emotion takes place when the poor birds gather together into columns, with a dizzy flight which terror precipitates, and plunge headlong into the nets let down to envelop them. All the pigeons caught alive are transferred to the dovecot, sold, and garnish the table of the mountaineer throughout the winter. Those made use of in autumn, and which are

said to be the best, are brought down with the fowling-piece. The fowlers attract them with living decoy-birds, whose eyes have been blinded.

The arrival of migratory birds in a country is determined by the ripeness of the fruit on which each species feeds. Some arrive in the Pyrenees at the beginning of the harvest, others during the vintage-time. The cranes form the rear-guard of the migration; but, directing their flight above the regions which the eagle frequents in summer, these birds pass onward without pause, unless bad weather and fogs derange their line of march, and force them to descend. The ash-coloured heron, the wild swan, the duck and wild goose, the teal, the bustard, and the stork sojourn in the Pyrenees during a portion of the winter.

In France there are four species of Waders, or "Stilt-birds" (*Grallae*, Order VII.): the *Pressirostres* (or "compact beak"), the *Cultriostres* ("knife-shaped beak"), the *Longirostres* ("long beak"), and the *Macroductyles* ("great claws").

PRESSIROSTRES-WADERS (OR OTIDIDAE AND CHARADRIIDAE).

The great bustard.....	<i>Otis tarda.</i>
The little bustard.....	<i>Otis tetraz.</i>
The common thick-knee.....	<i>Edicnemus crepitans.</i>
The golden plover.....	<i>Charadrius pluvialis.</i>
The dotterel.....	<i>Charadrius morinellus.</i>
The ring-plover.....	<i>Charadrius hiaticula.</i>
The lapwing, or peewit.....	<i>Vanellus cristatus.</i>
The oyster-catcher.....	<i>Haematopus ostralegus.</i>
The cream-coloured courser.....	<i>Cursorius gallicus.</i>

CULTRIOSTRES-WADERS (OR GRUIDAE AND ARDEIDAE.)

The common crane.....	<i>Grus cinerea.</i>
The purple heron.....	<i>Ardea purpurea.</i>

The gray heron.....	<i>Ardea cinerea.</i>
The great egret.....	<i>Ardea egretta.</i>
The little egret.....	<i>Ardea garzetta.</i>
The great white heron.....	<i>Ardea alba.</i>
The great bittern.....	<i>Botaurus stellaris.</i>
The night heron.....	<i>Nycticorax europæus.</i>



The heron, which, in the Middle Ages, was regarded as a timid bird, is wholly undeserving of such a reproach. An indefatigable and hungry fisher, he passes his life on the muddy margins of the rivers; but beware of attacking him, for no bird can more gallantly and more rudely make use of his strong beak, and of his feet armed with formidable claws.

The eagle himself often finds in the heron an adversary whom his strength by no means overawes. Belon relates that the heron, when pursued by the King of the Air, rises into the loftiest regions of the atmosphere. There he thrusts his beak into his own wing, and presents it to the eagle; the latter, owing to the impetuosity of his flight, transfixing himself upon it.

The American naturalist, Audubon, speaks with great enthusiasm of the heron of the New World, whose habits, by the way, closely resemble those of the European. But it is the night-heron whose picturesque and dramatic life he best loves to describe.

I place before my readers, in his own words, the narrative which he related to me, some thirty years ago, during a scientific excursion into Canada. The same narrative, nearly in the same language, he afterwards embodied in his beautiful work, "Scenes of Nature in the United States."

"The night-heron never quits the Southern prairies.

"He is found in large numbers in the marshy districts bordering on the coast, from the mouth of the river Sabine,



HERONS.

to the eastern boundary of South Carolina. Over all this vast extent of country you will meet with him, at any time of the year.

"The adult birds do not remain so entirely in the South

as the young; and legions of the latter remain all the winter in South Carolina.

"The Carolinians call them *Indian chickens*; the Creoles, *gros bus*; the inhabitants of Eastern Florida, *Indian hens*. As for the curious designation of *qua* bird, which is apparently intended as an imitation of his cry, it is very generally used in the Eastern States.

"The herons, except during their breeding season, are wild and suspicious, especially the adult birds; to get near them after they have once discovered you is no easy task. They seem to know the range of your rifle, watch all your movements, and, in the very nick of time, spring away from their perch. At the slightest noise, they all depart in a body, rapidly beating their wings, like the common pigeon, and, with their swiftness of flight, seeming to make a jest of your disappointment.

"On the other hand, they are easily killed if you search out the localities where they repose themselves during the day.

"They generally arrive one by one, or in little bodies; and, from his hiding-place amongst the trees, nothing is easier for the hunter than to choose a good range, and fire at the moment they pose themselves above his head. I have known persons who, in this manner, have killed, to a couple of guns, forty to fifty herons in a couple of hours.

"They may likewise be slain, any moment in the day, if you surprise them apart, when they are engaged in eating; and this is a mode of hunting I have frequently adopted with success in various parts of the United States, but more particularly in the central.

"Yet the herons rarely allow themselves to be surprised when they are not on the wing. They possess a still keener hearing than the American bittern; the latter, when he hears any sound, conceals himself among the grass, while the night-heron flies away immediately.

"The night-herons breed together, around stagnant waters, near rice plantations, in remote marshes, or on ocean-girdled islands, clothed with green trees.

"The heronries are established, sometimes among the low branches of the brush-wood, and sometimes upon trees either of moderate or considerable height, according as the one or the other may seem safest and most suitable.



THE LAST OF THE HERONS.

"In the Floridas, the herons seek the mangrove-trees which droop above the briny waves: in Louisiana, they prefer the cypresses; and, in the central districts, the cedars seem best adapted to their wants.

"In some of their colonies, not far from Charleston, which I visited in company with Beckmann, we found the nests placed underneath the bushes, and as close together as possible: some, at only three feet above the

ground, others at six to ten feet; a great number, entirely upon the branches; and a few in their bifurcations.

"We found more than a hundred set together, on the very threshold, as it were, of the bushes, and opposite the sea.

"The nests which I saw in the Floridas were invariably built on the south-west shore of the mangrove islands, but much further apart from one another: some being not more than a foot above high-water mark, while many were raised to the summit of the trees,—which, however, did not exceed twenty to thirty feet.

"In Louisiana I noticed not a few on the tops of immense cypresses not less than a hundred feet in height; and, side by side, were the nests of the *Ardea herodias*, the *Ardea alba*, and some anhingas.

"Thomas Nuttall affirms that on a very sequestered and marshy island, in what is called the *Freshpond*, near Boston, there exists an ancient heronry. The scapegraces of the town plunder the poor birds of their eggs at pleasure. The birds make no resistance, but immediately set to work to lay, and generally succeed in bringing up, a second brood.

"The nest of the night-heron is large, flat, composed of small sticks crossed in all directions, and with a thickness of three to four inches. Sometimes it is put together with so little care, that the little ones upset it before they are able to fly.

"The birds frequently confine themselves to repairing these nests yearly, and when they have once found a position which pleases them, they return to it periodically, until some catastrophe compels them to abandon it. The

female lays, at the most, four eggs. The shell is thin, and of a beautiful sea-green colour.

"About three weeks after they are hatched, most of the young ones quit the nest, climb along the branches to which it is suspended, and contrive to haul themselves up to the summit of the trees and bushes, where they wait until their parents bring them food.

"If you approach them at these moments, your presence creates an agitation among both parents and progeny; their continuous croaking suddenly ceases; the old ones fly away, and come hovering around you, or plant themselves on the neighbouring trees, while the little ones escape in every direction. Their terror is so great, that they will even dash headlong into the water, where they swim very well; soon they reach the shore, and hasten to conceal themselves where they can.

"Withdraw for about half an hour, and you are certain that you hear them calling one another again. Gradually their cries grow louder, and soon become as noisy as they were before. But the stench of the excrements which cover the abandoned nests, the branches and leaves of the trees and thickets as well as the soil; the fetid odour arising from the broken eggs and the carcasses of such of the young as have perished, joined to that of the fish and other matters on which the living feed, render a visit to a heronry a positive torture.

"Crows, vultures, and falcons torment these birds throughout the day, while rats and other carnivores destroy them under cover of the night.

"The flesh of the young, tender, fat, and succulent, is as good to eat as the flesh of a pigeon, and possesses but

the faintest trace of that disagreeable savour common to most birds which, like them, feed upon fish and reptiles.

"At this epoch of the year, we rarely find the old herons decorated with those tapering graceful feathers which hang behind their head like a drooping plume, and it is not until the end of the following winter that they grow again; but then, they attain their full length in a few weeks.

"When a heron feels that he is wounded, he seeks, in the first place, to conceal himself among the herbage and brushwood, where he buries himself in silence so soon as he has secured a good hiding-place. On the other hand, if he thinks he has no means of flight, he halts, rears aloft his crest, bristles his feathers, and prepares for defence, by opening his long beak, with which he sometimes deals you a heavy blow. But he does much more harm with his claws. On being seized, he utters a loud, harsh, continuous cry, and makes frantic efforts to escape."

Another member of the *Grallatorial* Birds, the Stork, is not less worthy of observation in Europe than the night-heron in America, on account of its curious habits. The following story is related on the authority of M. Martner:—

"I resided, while in Strasburg, on the third story of a lofty mansion, and from my windows could catch sight of five or six storks' nests; but from a large attic, above my room, I was able to see over all the city. These nests are all situated in the same quarter, and within a limited area, to the west of the cathedral, in a radius not exceeding three to four hundred yards; a fact indicating in these birds a very uncommon spirit of sociability.

"The arrival of the stork takes place constantly towards the close of February, and their departure in the early days of autumn. Their first care, after securing possession of their abode, which appears to be always the property of one and the same family, is to repair the injuries caused by the winter. For this purpose they hunt about the country in search of twigs and broken branches, which they very solidly work into the old construction, until the nests are sometimes twenty to twenty-four inches in height. They are situated on the summit of disused chimneys, or on those covered with a flat



THE STORK AT HOME.

slate or stone. In the country, the peasants endeavour to attract them by placing on their chimneys, or the gable end of the church, an old cart-wheel, or even a small plank, to serve as a support for their edifices. . .

"The storks range over all the low districts of Alsace, which consist of ample meadows, intersected by water-courses, where they readily obtain sufficient supplies of food. They halt at the foot of the Vosges, never passing beyond that mountain-chain. However, it did once happen that a couple of these birds established themselves at Luneville, building their nest on the head of a statue which crowns the tower of the principal church. This statue represents the archangel Saint Michael, whose wings served to support the sides of the nest. The attempt does not seem to have been satisfactory to them; for they never returned. At Saverne, there also existed a very ancient nest on the roof of the house belonging to my family. It was inhabited every year, until, in consequence of a discharge of fireworks in the neighbourhood, the storks suddenly disappeared, to show themselves no more. I know not whether by this time a new brood has taken possession of it.

"To return to the storks of Strasburg: I have been an eye-witness of many facts, one of which proves that between these birds an understanding prevails, similar to that which indubitably prevails among the swallows. A couple, young and inexperienced, doubtless, had established themselves on a vacant chimney opposite my windows: the nest was rapidly built up; but, one day, half-a-dozen storks, perceiving that it was being formed at the expense of their own nests, furiously precipitated them-

selves on the new edifice, flung a portion of the materials to the ground, and carried off the remainder in their bills. To accomplish this *coup*, they had taken advantage of the absence of the young couple.

“Those birds generally lay two or three eggs; but I remember to have seen a nest containing five young ones. By degrees, as the little ones grow stronger, their appetite increases, and their parents find it a hard task to supply them with the necessary nourishment. On a certain day, one of the latter arriving with the provender—apparently a living adder, which struggled greatly—the young birds eagerly stretched out their beaks, each of them wanting to be served first, and probably they scratched or pinched their mother. The latter settled down on the nest, stamping with rage for some moments; then, inclining her head on one side, she looked them fixedly in the face for a few minutes, as if to threaten them. The young storks did not stir; they remained perfectly quiet, and at last received with much contentment the food their mother distributed equally among them.

“As the little ones grow, the nest becomes too narrow; and the parents retire at nightfall to the ridge of the nearest roofs. I can conceive of nothing more amusing than the spectacle of the young birds attempting to fly: at first they rear themselves erect on their long feet, beating awkwardly with their wings, and with an irregular motion; then they rise a little with the same kind of motion, and fall back heavily into their nest. The parents had taught them this exercise by a similar manoeuvre. At the end of eight to ten days, they are able to take their flight, increasing the distance gradually. Sometimes

they have presumed too much upon their strength ; they are then lifted up very carefully, and placed in the court-yards or gardens. In captivity, they stalk about gravely, and never grow familiar. I have seen at Saverne, in a bathing-establishment, one of these birds, whose lower mandible had been broken in a quarrel with a dog over some disputed dainty. The poor animal was necessarily dying of famine. A tinman was called in, who imitated the missing portion of the bill in tin, and fastened it to



A FILE OF STORKS.

the uninjured part with small tacks. Thenceforth the bird was able to take his food.

“ The storks depart from our country early ; I think at the beginning of September. But long before this epoch the nests are empty ; parents and children pass the day in the fields, on the brink of streams and pools, where they find little fish and frogs and mice and large insects, for all is good to them ; and they do not return until the evening, when they take up their positions on the roofs. Some days before their departure, you may see them ar-

ranged in a long line on the lofty and narrow roof of the Protestant church, called the New Temple. You hear them, during the night, continually clacking with their bills, as if in concert. Then, one fine morning, not a single bird is visible ; they have set out at daybreak."



Next to the herons, in the family of the *Grallae*, come the *Cultrirostres* :—

The glossy ibis.....	<i>Ibis falcinellus.</i>
The white spoonbill.....	<i>Platalea leucorodia.</i>
The white stork.....	<i>Ciconia alba.</i>
The black stork.....	<i>Ciconia nigra.</i>
The Maguari stork.....	<i>Ciconia Maguari.</i>

The latter species is rare in France ; but a few individuals are killed yearly at the epoch of the passage of these birds.



LONGIROSTRES-WADERS (OR SCOLOPACIDAE).

The curlew.....	<i>Numenius aquata.</i>
The black-tailed godwit.....	<i>Limosa melanura.</i>
The common snipe.....	<i>Scolopax gallinago.</i>
The great snipe.....	<i>Scolopax major.</i>
The woodcock.....	<i>Scolopax rusticola.</i>
The jack snipe.....	<i>Scolopax gallinula.</i>
The godwit.....	<i>Scolopax limosa rufa.</i>
The ruff.....	<i>Philomachus pugnax.</i>
The sandpiper.....	<i>Totanus hypoleucos.</i>
The knot.....	<i>Tringa canutus.</i>
The little sandpiper.....	<i>Tringa minuta.</i>
The purple sandpiper.....	<i>Tringa maritima.</i>
The redshank.....	<i>Totanus calidris.</i>
The green sandpiper.....	<i>Totanus oehropus.</i>



THE SNIPES.

The greenshank.....	<i>Totanus glottis.</i>
The dunlin.....	<i>Tringa variabilis.</i>
The stilt.....	<i>Himantopus melanopterus.</i>
The avocet.....	<i>Recurvirostra avocetta.</i>



MACRODACTYLE-WADERS (OR RALLIDAE).

The water rail.....	<i>Rallus aquaticus.</i>
The land rail.....	<i>Crex pratensis.</i>
The spotted rail.....	<i>Rallus porhana.</i>
The gallinule.....	<i>Gallinula chloropus.</i>
The coot.....	<i>Fulica atra.</i>



The *Natatores*—that is to say, birds with webbed feet, adapted for swimming purposes, like the human hand—are divided into six well-defined families:—1. *Anatidae*; 2. *Colymbidae*; 3. *Alcidae*; 4. *Procellariidae*; 5. *Laridae*; 6. *Pelecanidae*.

THE COLYMBIDAE.

The black-throated diver	<i>Colymbus arcticus.</i>
The great northern diver	<i>Colymbus glacialis.</i>
The red-throated diver	<i>Colymbus septentrionalis.</i>
The great-crested grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus.</i>

THE ALCADAE.

The common, or foolish guillemot....	<i>Uria troie.</i>
The black guillemot.....	<i>Uria grylle.</i>
The ringed guillemot.....	<i>Uria lacrymans.</i>
The little auk.....	<i>Mergulus alle.</i>
The great auk.....	<i>Alca impennis.</i>
The common penguin	<i>Alca torda.</i>
The puffin.....	<i>Fratercula arctica.</i>

Almost all these birds inhabit France but for a part of the year, and migrate from one country to another, according to the changes of temperature and the seasons.

THE PROCELLARIDAE.

These birds are the familiar spirits of the sea; but we landmen, who live "at home in ease," encounter them only in our harbours, where they live at the cost of the fish they catch, or the shell-fish they gather on the shores.



A GROUP OF AUKS.



ARRIVAL OF SWIMMING-BIRDS.

The English petrel, or Manks shearwater.....*Puffinus Anglorum.*
 Leach's petrel.....*Procellaria Leachii.*
 The stormy petrel*Procellaria pelagica.*

THE LARIDÆ.

The herring gull	<i>Larus argentatus.</i>
The common gull.....	<i>Larus canus.</i>
The great black-backed gull.....	<i>Larus marinus.</i>
The lesser black-backed gull.....	<i>Larus fuscus.</i>
The little gull.....	<i>Larus minutus.</i>
The black-headed gull.....	<i>Xema ridibunda.</i>
The kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla.</i>
The blue gull	<i>Larus glaucus.</i>
The common tern.....	<i>Sterna hirundo.</i>
The lesser tern.....	<i>Sterna minuta.</i>
The black tern.....	<i>Hydrochelidon nigra.</i>
The roseate tern.....	<i>Sterna Dougallii.</i>
The Caspian tern.....	<i>Sterna Caspia.</i>



We have now arrived at

THE PELECANIDÆ.

These form the last family of the order *Natatores*. They are very uncommon; in fact, are only met with by accident (as it were) in France and England. However this may be, naturalists place them among the indigenous birds: and in this enumeration of French and British birds, I content myself with laying down the received classifications, and do not pretend to discuss them.

The common pelican	<i>Pelecanus Onocrotalus.</i>
The cormorant.....	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo.</i>
The green cormorant.....	<i>Phalacrocorax graculus.</i>
The gannet, or solan goose.....	<i>Sula bassana.</i>



On the other hand,

THE ANATIDÆ

are numerous and almost vulgar; many of them belonging to the domestic species.

The wild swan.....	<i>Cygnus ferus.</i>
The tame, or mute swan.....	<i>Cygnus olor.</i>
* The wild goose	<i>Anser ferus.</i>
The bean goose	<i>Anser segetum.</i>
The white-fronted, or laughing goose.	<i>Anser albifrons.</i>
The Brent goose.....	<i>Anser Bernicla.</i>
The wild duck, or mallard	<i>Anas Boschas.</i>
The shieldrake	<i>Tadorna vulpanser.</i>
The shoveller	<i>Spatula clypeata.</i>
The pintail duck.....	<i>Dasila acuta.</i>
The teal.....	<i>Querquedula crecca.</i>
The widgeon	<i>Mareca penelope.</i>
The tufted duck	<i>Fuligula cristata.</i>
The harlequin duck.....	<i>Fuligula histrionica.</i>
The scaup duck.....	<i>Fuligula marina.</i>
The golden eye	<i>Fuligula clangula.</i>
The buffel-headed duck	<i>Fuligula albeola.</i>
The long-tailed duck.....	<i>Harelda glacialis.</i>
The eider duck.....	<i>Somateria mollissima.</i>
* The common scoter.....	<i>Oidemia nigra.</i>
The goosander.....	<i>Mergus merganser.</i>
The red-breasted merganser	<i>Mergus serrator.</i>
* The hooded merganser.....	<i>Mergus cucullatus.</i>

To this list many others might be added, but they form varieties rather than species. We have distinguished by an asterisk (*) those which are comparatively rare visitors to our shores.





CHAPTER XVII.

THE POULTRY-YARD.

THE POULTRY-YARD—ITS DRAMATIC SCENES AND ITS PHENOMENA —
A BUZZARD AND A GOOSE—EXTRACTS FROM OLIVIER DE SERRES.



HAVE been unwilling to interrupt the foregoing lists for the purpose of relating any curious traits of character, though so many are connected both with the history of the *Accipitres*, or birds of prey, and of the *Natatores*, or Swimmers.

But I trust the reader will not for one moment suppose that naturalists, when they think proper, cannot indulge in the moving spectacle of fantastic dramas, fertile in surprises, and rich in all kinds of scenic effects. An ornithologist, who dwells near the forest of Fontainebleau, has related to me a real romance, which I will now repeat for the reader's benefit; and which will produce, I am certain, something of the same emotion in *him* that I still experience on taking up my pen to record it.

This ornithologist had remarked, near a small pond, in the thickest part of the boughs of an oak, the nest of a buzzard. Every evening the bird of prey and his mate, as soon as twilight appeared, rose in the air, wheeled to and fro, or hovered there, and, at the proper moment, suddenly dropped down on the field-mice, adders, and other tiny animals which profited by the shades of nightfall to emerge from their hiding-places and prowls about for food.

Soon the male alone showed himself outside his nest; the female accompanied him but seldom, and always made haste to return home.

The ornithologist concluded that she had laid her eggs, and commenced to sit upon them.

This reflection occurred to him while he was walking in his poultry-yard, among his hens and ducks and geese.

Suddenly a curious idea struck him. He took four goose eggs, wrapped them up carefully in his handkerchief; fastened to his legs those iron hooks which woodmen employ in climbing trees, and bravely began to escalate the oak up to the position of the buzzard's nest, which he reached at the very moment that both the cock and hen birds had gone after a troop of swallows, some four or five hundred yards distant.

He took out the eggs, whitish and spotted with yellow, which reposed softly in the nest, on a bed of wool and feathers, substituted the goose's eggs he had brought with him, and hastened to regain *terra firma*. It was time: the two buzzards, gorged with plunder, were sweeping homewards.

Returning to the poultry-yard, he placed the eggs just acquired in the corner of the hen-house, where a goose

had laid the eggs now transported to the airy elevation of a buzzard's nest.

After which he mounted upon the roof of his house, which was converted into a kind of observatory, and directed his telescope towards the buzzard's oak.

The two birds appeared at first to perceive that some one had touched their nest. They veered about anxiously for some seconds before they entered it; the female was the first to overcome her reluctance, turned over the goose's eggs three or four times with her bill, ended by sitting upon them and resuming her incubation.

Much the same series of incidents occurred in the poultry-yard. The goose at last set conscientiously to work, and hatched unsuspectingly the eggs which had been substituted for her own.

Several times a day the naturalist placed his right eye to his telescope, and watched how things were passing among the foliage of the old oak.

You may judge of his emotion when, one morning, he perceived in the nest four little *birdlets*.

While the male kept watch on a neighbouring branch, the female buzzard swooped down to the pond, caught in her claws a number of tadpoles, and returned with them to her supposititious little ones, who snatched them from the buzzard, bruised and pounded them in the nest, and, after a short struggle, swallowed the food accidentally suitable to their tastes.

Every morning and evening the buzzard renewed her supplies. The pond extended, as it were, at the foot of the oak, and swarmed with tadpoles and young frogs: all that the hen-bird had to do was to lower her bill or open

her claws, and gather as abundant an harvest as she chose.

All was going on very well, until, three or four days later, the new-born goslings began to experience an agitation, which aroused in their supposititious mother as much surprise as anguish. They leant over the edge of the nest, and uttered most melancholy cries, clapping their wings, and stretching their necks towards the pond. At last, the strongest of the goslings could no longer rest contented; he darted forth, opened his wings parachute-wise, and fell, a little stunned, among the tall grass; he was not long, however, in recovering himself. He soon rose, waddled down to the pond, and began to paddle about with ineffable delight, summoning his brothers by cries of joy.

On seeing the little one she had hatched hastening towards the deep water of the pond, the buzzard dropped hastily down to stop the imprudent scapegrace, who was swimming with more enjoyment than ever. He struck across from right to left; navigated the pond with his tail to the wind and his wings half-extended, without paying any regard to his nurse; who, meanwhile, flew above the water, uttered cries of alarm, and supplicated the swimmer to return to the dry land.

Once she even attempted to employ authority, and rushed upon the disobedient gosling to carry him off to her nest; but the gosling dived, and when he showed himself again, it was at ten paces from the spot where he had disappeared.

In terrible consternation the buzzard returned to her nest. Alas, she found it in a state of sedition!

The brothers of the fugitive had heard his frequent calls, while he was bathing in the pond. The aquatic instinct immediately awoke in them. Gathering on the edge of the nest, they quacked in a manner most humiliating and afflicting to the ears of the bird of prey.

A kind of struggle took place between the little rebels and the buzzard; then, the dread which had confined them in the nest giving way before a new spirit of anger and resistance, all three rushed forth, descended into the pond, and quickly rejoined their brother.

From that moment the grief of the buzzard knew no bounds, and she rushed into the water in pursuit of the fugitives. She beat the surface with her long wings; she poured forth bitter lamentations which moved the heart of the spectator, so plainly did maternal love and despair find expression in them. At last, after an hour's prolonged entreaties, her feet got entangled among the grasses of the pond. Overcome by fatigue, she embarrassed herself more and more in rush, and reed, and mud, and finally lay motionless and inanimate by the side of the ducklings, who carelessly pecked at the feathers of her who had perished through her devoted affection for them.

Meanwhile, the goose, to whom the buzzard's eggs had been confided, hatched them with as much anxiety as if they had been laid by herself. One fine morning, while the naturalist was watching from his window the poultry sporting and struggling upon the dunghill, around a kind of miniature pool, he saw the goose suddenly issue from the nest she had constructed in one of the angles

of the wall, which was sheltered by a wooden pent-house.

Four little buzzards covered with a whitish down opened their large yellow beaks, and uttered cries significant of a good appetite.

The goose, on hearing them, had sprung from her nest. Half-immersed in the pool, she summoned the new-born, and invited them to partake with her of the pleasures of the bath. The buzzards would not stir from their place, for the very simple reason that their feet were too small to support their body; and, moreover, because they did not understand the summons of their supposititious mother. The goose, impatient, quitted the pond, approached the brood, and eventually lifted up the fledglings with her bill.

They cried their very loudest, but did not move a step.

Whereupon the goose, with one blow of her wing, scattered them in all directions, smelt them one by one, turned them over and over in every direction, and examined them with equal attention and surprise.

As soon as she was convinced that the birds she had hatched did not belong to her species, and that she had been made the victim of some treacherous device, she rushed upon the four little creatures, struck them with her bill, crushed them under her webbed feet, seized them one after the other, and flung them into the pond, where she completed her cruel work.

After which she soaked them for a long time in the water, and devoured them.

Thus the bird of prey fell a victim to her maternal illusions, and the bird of the poultry-yard took a brutal



THE BUZZARD.

revenge for the deception played upon her in the matter of her heterogeneous brood.

May not this narrative serve as a plea in favour of the civilization of animals!



While we are engaged with the Farm and the Hen-house, let us show you certain of the Gallinacæ, which

make the farm-wife's profit. They are depicted with much graphic force, in his *Théâtre de l'Agriculture et Mesnage des Champs*, by the Seigneur du Pradel, Olivier de Serres.

He begins by recommending, with fastidious minuteness, the various cares which are required by the "common poultry, and the method of their accommodation," to use his own quaint expressions.

"To the end that our house (that is, our poultry-house) may contain not only its necessities, but also some delights and pleasures, such as honestly one may wish them to enjoy, —after we have provided for the principal cattle, let us make arrangements for the others; who, moreover, will tend to the augmentation of our revenue,—I mean, all kinds of poultry.

"The food on which poultry are fed is so vulgar, that it seems useless to treat of it particularly, the *simplest-minded woman* being learned in this subject, for there is no farmyard so poor that it cannot supply its poultry with something to eat. Nevertheless, from various observations, better understood in one place than another, and represented to the housewife, to whom this business properly belongs, everybody will learn something, so as to make more productive the food they are in the habit of supplying.

"It is to be noted that there are numerous and diverse races and species of poultry, domestic and foreign, for whom this food is mixed, and therefore it is necessary to discriminate between them so as to provide for each according to its peculiar temperament. The common or



IN THE POULTRY-YARD.

domestic hens are those who have been inhabitants of our country from all antiquity ; differing, however, in some

respects, among themselves, as in size of body, colour, and quantity of plumage; but not unlike in nature, being all very good to eat, unsurpassed in delicacy, and furnishing excellent eggs.

“As for foreign kinds, those of Hindustan, called pea-fowls, are the most known, have been naturalized in this realm for a considerable period, and, from use, are easily reared up. Next come the *Numidian* hens, a species of pheasant; then, water-hens, bustards, herons,



A NUMIDIAN HEN.

egrets, and the like. And of other fowl we may bring up partridges, and teal, and water-thrushes (*turdus aquaticus*), storks and cranes, and the like, migratory birds, aquatic and terrestrial—not without great difficulty; but then it is a task for *rich* lords, who think more of pleasure than of profit, and take no thought of expense. Swans and peacocks will not be rejected, though they are not equally easy to bring up, owing to the difference in their nature; for swans cannot be reared, except with great difficulty, in a place to which they are not accus-

tomed; but the peacock, almost everywhere. As for aquatic fowl, besides the swan, there are the goose and the common ducks of India, in the very first rank; the two latter forming a third and bastard race when the Indian drake and the common duck couple together.

"It is necessary, in the first place, to provide a convenient lodging for each species of these poultry, without which they will not flourish one-half as much as they ought; inasmuch as these animals, small or great, do not live upon good terms with one another, but are constantly losing some of their kind by stamping and biting, the strong oppressing the weak. The feathers and ordure are pernicious to every kind of cattle, large and small; wherefore these animals should be separated from the other, to the end that each should be lodged comfortably and apart. Add this reason, that the eggs, where cattle and poultry are mixed, are frequently lost; inasmuch as the cattle break or eat them, and thieves steal them. Now it is of much importance that we should not deprive ourselves of such a commodity, the first gain of the poultry and common duck.

"According to the rules of the ancients, our poultry-houses should be directed towards the east in winter, to the end that the poultry may be warmed by the sun at its rising. And if we would follow out their advice completely, we shall join the hen-houses to the furnace, or kitchen; so arranging them that the smoke as it issues forth may penetrate to the poultry, for their health. But this counsel is not very generally acted upon, on account of the many inconveniences resulting from the proximity of poultry to the house,—which they soil with their

excrement, and disturb with their noise; wherefore we lodge them as far as possible from human habitation. It will be, then, in the furthest court-yard or meadow that we shall plant our hen-houses, but in the warmest locality that we can select. We must build three or four, adjoining each other, and on an exactly similar scale, but all facing eastward, as already provided; one house to each species of fowl, that all may be lodged according to their desire.

“One will suffice for the geese and ducks, on account of their sympathy of habits; unless, indeed, you possess such a great quantity of waterfowl that it is desirable to provide separate houses for each kind.

“A single domicile, however, will not answer for common poultry and those of India, since, owing to their peculiar habits, they do not agree well together. Cocks, capons, and common hens, which roost in company, may very well be settled in the same house. They live gregariously throughout the day, being all of the same genus, though of different sex. Nevertheless, the capons prove gradually prejudicial to the hens, preventing them from laying eggs abundantly. The sole remedy for this is separation; keeping them apart in distinct areas, the capons on one side, and the hens on the other; but if such an arrangement be adopted, the hens must be lodged near the house, for the sake of preserving the eggs, as well as on account of the ease with which the mistress can treat her poultry, so that they may lay the more abundantly.

“No suggestion need be made in reference to the form and dimensions of the hen-house, every one being free to build it as he likes, provided it is not too small. A

reasonable size for each hen-house would be eight feet long by eight feet broad, and about seven feet in height. It should have an arched roof, so that the poultry may be warmer in winter and cooler in summer, and less disturbed by mice, weasels, ferrets, and similar enemies. Windows to admit the light, and entrances for the poultry, will be made and arranged according to the wants of each species. And, moreover, each hen-house must have a door for the ingress and egress of the mistress and her servants; place it where you most conveniently can, always providing that it does not have a northern aspect.

"The walls must be of a good material, well built, and properly whitewashed both inside and outside. In their thickness you must excavate suitable places for the nests of the hens; and adjoining these must be inserted the roosting-poles, according to the peculiar desire of each species, as we shall see hereafter. Beside these recesses you will require a few compartments, in the house or elsewhere, for the accommodation of the hens when sitting and bringing up their young. Here the latter will be safe until old enough to mix with others of a greater age, and will be exempt from the danger of being trodden under foot by men and beasts, or eaten by dogs and pigs. If you have no such compartments, large cages will suffice, if they are properly arranged.

"In the hen-house we are now speaking of, there should be two openings on the eastern side; one, a window two feet long and one foot broad, to lighten the interior. This window, for safety, should be defended by iron bars inserted in the thickness of the wall, and over these should

be spread a sheet of iron wire, to prevent the poultry from *egress*, and rats, weasels, and ferrets from *ingress*. The other opening will be adapted for the entrance and exit of the poultry, and should be about eight or nine inches square, with a small ladder of many little steps leading up to it. You will lock up this doorway every evening when the poultry have retired, and open it every morning to let them go forth into the fields to pasture,—at which time you can easily count their numbers as they defile in a single row. This opening should be about six feet higher than the ground within, or about a man's height. And exactly at this level should be constructed the roosting-place, so that the birds, on entering, may pass along it without ascending or descending; and thence, with the same ease, to the holes and nests where they lay,—which for this reason should adjoin the roosting-place. It should consist of square wooden perches, on which the poultry can rest themselves more securely than on rounded ones; and the number should be considerable, so that the roosting-place may contain all your poultry.

“The house is now prepared. The next duty is, to place in it the very best poultry you can obtain. The most desirable race of hens is that which, with the greatest delicacy of flesh, furnishes eggs abundantly for the most part of the year. These qualities are generally found in those which are moderately plump, neither too large nor too small, and whose plumage, whether black or tawny or white, is of a clear fresh colour. The black are praised above all others by physicians for the quality of their eggs, which are very wholesome, and always abundant in number; while hens of black plumage are

always more joyous and robust than those of white. And for another cause the white are less esteemed; namely, that they suffer more from birds of prey than the black, owing to their colour being easily discoverable at a distance. The crest hanging on one side is a sure sign of fertility; the yellow colour of the feet and legs, of delicate and wholesome flesh.

"Moreover, choose you the hen according to the qualities of the cock, which, as nearly as possible, should be the following:—

"Let the cock be of average size, rather large than small; of a black or dull red plumage; the feet large, provided with nails and claws, and with strong sharp spurs; the legs robust, and, like the feet, of a yellow colour; the thighs massive, and furnished with feathers; the chest broad; the neck elevated, and thickly garnished with feathers of different and varying colours,—golden, yellow, violet, red; the head large and carried haughtily; the comb red as scarlet, double, and frizzled; the bill thick and short; the eyes black and shining; the ears broad and white; the beard long and pendent; the wings strong and well-furnished with feathers; and the tail great and high, so as to double nearly over the head. The cock should also be vigilant, courageous, active, robust, prompt to crow, and affectionate in the defence of his hens, and in making them eat."

It is impossible, assuredly, to read anything more charming, and Buffon himself has never attained to the naïveté and charm of the picture I have just placed before your eyes.



THE MONARCH OF ALL HE SURVEYS.

"The mistress," continues Olivier de Serres, "to obtain some relief, will commit the charge of the poultry to



THE CAREFUL HOUSEWIFE.

the most experienced and diligent of her servants, limiting herself to the general superintendence. Which ser-

vant, by express command, will have the care of feeding the poultry, of shutting them up at night, of letting them out in the morning, and of occasionally counting them; and, in fine, to every detail connected with their management she will be required to attend. As, for instance, withdrawing the hens' eggs daily, and putting them apart, each day's in a separate compartment, so as



A FAMILY GROUP.

to distinguish the fresh from the old; and employing them according to the various purposes for which they are required. Cleansing the hen-house thoroughly, and removing the filth from nests, and roosting-poles, and every corner. Perfuming them frequently with odoriferous herbs, and occasionally burning incense, benzoin, and similar drugs, to drive out the pestiferous air, and prevent the

rise of any epidemic disease. Refreshing the nests with new straw, or better still, with hay, which is not so likely to engender vermin as straw.

"Hens have their special season for laying. Hens of a robust nature, in warm and temperate countries, lay eggs longer than the weak, in cold. Cold is a common enemy, for all species cease laying in the depth of winter. It is true that the skill of man being admirable in many things, he has found a means of compelling fowls, contrary to the laws of nature, to lay in winter. But three things must concur: the strength of the hen, the place where she is domiciliated, and the food on which she is nourished.

"A small number of hens, well marked, and neither too fat nor too lean, too old nor too young, must be shut up for fattening in a warm airy chamber. There they must be richly fed. Barley, boiled and opened, is good for them; also oats; crumbs of bread and meat from the table; all sorts of siftings of wheat; but, especially, hempseed. You must take care that they are sufficiently supplied with these viands, and also with fresh clear water; that the ordure is frequently removed, and the nest-straw constantly shaken, and, when necessary, replenished."

But here, I think, my extracts may close, quaintly simple and attractive as I doubt not the reader has found them.

No one, I am certain, will complain of their length, and I less than any other.

In fact, I imitate the swallow of which Plutarch speaks

as having built her nest between the very feet of a statue of Minerva.

Men spared the nest of the bird for the sake of the goddess ; and the reader, perhaps, will spare my book on account of Olivier de Serres.



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